

# R E M A R K S

ON THE

REVEREND MR. EMMONS'S

## DISSERTATION

ON THE

SCRIPTURAL QUALIFICATIONS

FOR

ADMISSION AND ACCESS

TO THE

CHRISTIAN SACRAMENTS;

AND ON HIS

STRICTURES ON A DISCOURSE CONCERNING THE  
CHURCH.



BY MOSES HEMMENWAY, D. D.



PASTOR OF A CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN WELLS.

I am for peace : but when I speak, they are for war.

*Psalms cxx. 7.*

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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*THE following Remarks are disposed in Chapters, and Sections, answering to those in the Dissertation and Strictures here noticed; which may be found convenient for such readers (if any such there should be) who may be willing to take the trouble of comparing them together. Though many things have been passed over, which might have been objects of animadversion, yet it has been endeavored that all points of chief importance should have some due attention paid to them.*

WELLS (District of Maine) May 1, 1794.

# THE HISTORY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON FROM 1630 TO 1800

The history of the city of Boston, from 1630 to 1800, is a story of growth and change. It begins with the arrival of the first settlers in 1630, who founded the city as a haven for religious freedom. Over the years, Boston grew from a small village into a major center of commerce and industry. The city played a key role in the American Revolution, and its history is marked by many significant events. The city's population grew steadily, and its economy diversified. By 1800, Boston was one of the largest and most important cities in the United States.



## R E M A R K S, &c.

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### I N T R O D U C T I O N.

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MR. EMMONS introduces his Dissertation with saying, that "The first ministers and churches in New England were unanimously agreed, that none ought to come to the table of the Lord but the subjects of saving grace."

But no proof of this is attempted; and I presume it can never be made to appear. It seems indeed to have been the general opinion, that none ought to be admitted to full communion but true saints in a judgment of christian charity; and that none ought to come but those who find reason to hope they are sincere. And the *Discourse on the Church* expressly agrees with them in both these points.

But it is certain they held and taught, and that unanimously so far as appears, that doubting christians may and ought to come to communion. Now since it is uncertain whether those who doubt their own sincerity are true saints, if these may and ought to come to communion, it can never be maintained that true saints only ought to come. If those have an acknowledged warrant to come, who do not certainly appear to be saints, it can never be proved, that true saints only have a warrant. Why should we then think that wise and good men were unanimously so inconsistent? Is it not injurious to presume such a thing, and that without any sufficient evidence?

However, they certainly held those fundamental principles, which, if they are true, Mr. E. acknowledges that "the scheme I

have built upon them is true, and must stand forever." They held that professors of the true religion, with their children, are visible saints, members of the visible church, though unregenerate: That they are interested in the covenant, and under the outward administration of it. That the outward ordinances and privileges are granted and belong to visible saints, as such. That all those are to be admitted to outward communion who hold forth evidence, to a judgment of charity, that they are in a measure actually fit for it; and that those may and ought to come, who are sincere in religion, so far as they know themselves. So that *the Discourse on the Church*, is founded on principles which have been generally received in our churches, and maintained by our most approved Divines. Accordingly our author attacks all or most of these principles, in which the first ministers and churches, were agreed, and builds his scheme on the ruins of them.

Mr. Stoddard, it is said (for I never read any of his writings on the subject, except what I found quoted by others) advanced some sentiments different from the more received opinion. But if he held that the church ought to receive such as give no evidence of saving grace, and, that such may and ought to come who know themselves to be unconverted, then I have expressly declared that I am otherwise minded; and if this be what Dr. Mather calls a "strange doctrine" it is a doctrine which I never taught.

Mr. E. adds, "Ministers and churches have generally been divided into Edwardians and Stoddardians." I do not think that our ministers and churches are in general fully in sentiment either with Mr. Stoddard or Mr. Edwards. It is the more general opinion, I conceive, that those eminent men carried points too far, as disputants are too apt to do; and that if due abatements were made on each side, their schemes would coincide in all points of importance. Be this as it may, Mr. Emmons differs greatly from both, as well as from our churches in general; as we shall have occasion to observe in the sequel. Our author adds, "Here the dispute rested for many years; and here perhaps it had been well for the public if it had still rested. After two such able divines had amply discussed the subject, there was but little ground to expect that much new light could be thrown upon it by any who should resume the controversy." If Mr. E. thought so, some may ask, what need there was for his resuming the dispute? Was it merely for the sake of wrangling, from which little or no light was expected? Or was it that he thought himself capable of throwing light on the subject, though

this was not to be expected from any other? But though the author of the Discourse on the Church means not to apologize to Mr. E. yet it may be seen, I think, that his design was not to revive a controversy, but rather to try, after so many years since the dispute was in agitation, whether any thing could be done to reconcile those, who, in the heat of contention, might seem too much disaffected to each other: And I am not disappointed in finding some moved with resentment at such a design. They who delight in contention, in biting and worrying others, it may be expected will be apt to fall foul on those who attempt to take away their balls.

The discourse which Mr. E. has made the object of his *Strictures*, was not designed as an attack on any person or scheme—The author aimed, without attachment to, or prejudice against any, to join with each party, wherein they appear to have truth and reason on their side, and no further. Whether he has in this offended against the rules of prudence, modesty, or charity, the impartial public will judge.

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## CHAPTER I.

MR. EMMONS's first chapter gives a definition of the Church. And to avoid the mistakes of others "who," he says, "have palmed their own, instead of the scripture ideas," he professes "to draw his definition from the pure source of divine revelation." The first sense mentioned is "the whole number of them who shall be sanctified and saved." Of this there is no dispute.

The second sense is the universal visible church, which he defines; "The whole number of God's *professing people* in all parts of the world." By this he means those only who make an *actual* and *personal* profession of religion, exclusive of their children. But to this we object, that it leaves out a great part of those who, according to the scriptures, and by the general consent of christians, belong to the visible church. Mr. Edwards says, "All who acknowledge infant baptism allow infants, who are the proper subjects of baptism, and are baptized, to be in some sort members of the christian church." How unanimous the protestant churches are in this point, may be seen in the harmony of their confessions of faith. The scriptures also plainly teach, that little children belong to the kingdom of

heaven : by which is meant the visible church. They are holy, or saints ; a title given to none of the children of men but members of the church. " If the root be holy, so are the branches." The promise of the covenant which forms the church, is to the children, as well as the parents. These proofs, which I only hint at with many others, have been fully opened and defended by others. And Mr. E. has said nothing to invalidate them. Though he pretends to draw his definitions from the scriptures, yet none of the texts he has cited, intimate or imply that *actual and personal professors only*, are members of the visible church ; so that he has " palmed his own, instead of the scripture ideas," upon the minds of his readers. And we find nothing to support this definition but his assertion.

And there is not the least evidence, that congregational churches consisted only of adult personal professors.

If *the church* had been rightly defined, according to the scriptures, and the general sense of christians, it would have appeared that every particular in the passage quoted from the *Discourse* is undeniably true. There is, however, a great misrepresentation when he says, that " I take some adult persons, who have made no profession of religion, not only into the visible church, but into the covenant of grace." He will doubtless grant that there are adult believers who are not professors ; and that these are in the covenant of grace, and in the invisible church. But that they are in the visible church, is not said or intimated ; and it appears not that any thing is asserted in the quoted passage, but what is *granted in fact*, if not by Mr. Emmons, yet by all others who acknowledge infant baptism, and have published their sentiments on the subject.

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## CHAPTER II.

**I**N the next chapter our author considers the covenant of grace, from pages 12 to 44. The chapter is divided into five sections.

### SECTION I.

HE defines a covenant, as distinguished from a mere declaration or promise, to be " A mutual contract, stipulation, or agreement between two or more parties, by which they bind themselves to each other upon certain conditions. Every cov-

enant requires the consent of the parties concerned. Mutual consent is the only thing which gives sanction to a covenant. God can no more enter into covenant with men without their personal consent, than they can enter into covenant with each other without their personal consent." On this I would observe,

1. Whatever any may suppose that the word *covenant* may signify in its strictest and most proper sense, as used among mankind, yet in scripture it is certainly used in a larger sense. A divine constitution containing a grant of special favours to the children of men, and enjoining duties as the condition of the continuance of those favours, or the grant of further ones, is, in the language of scripture, a covenant, though a personal and formal consent of the subject party were not given to it. This being the case, it is in vain to say that such a divine constitution is termed covenant in scripture, only in a *figurative* sense, because some circumstances and formalities required in human compacts are wanting. If it be a covenant in the scriptural sense, this is sufficient to support us in giving it that denomination.

2. Suppose mutual consent of the parties, is held necessary in a proper formal covenant, yet the *actual personal consent* of all who are comprehended and interested therein is not necessary. This appears from the common sense and usages of mankind, among whom covenants are often made by authorized representatives, in which many are interested, who have not actually and personally consented. Parents covenant for themselves and children. Agents covenant on behalf of those they act for; who are held as much bound to fulfil the stipulated engagements, and as fully entitled to the stipulated grants and privileges, as if they had personally consented to them. And it is abundantly evident from scripture, that in the covenants which God has condescended to make with the children of men, many were included without their actual and personal consent; others being authorized to covenant in their behalf. In the primitive constitution, under which our first parents were placed, it appears not that their actual consent was asked for, as necessary to their coming under it. But it is certain that their posterity were interested in it without their personal consent. And the covenant with Abraham was established with him, and his unborn posterity. "The covenant in the plains of Moab was also made with the little ones, as well as the men of Israel; with those who were not, as well as with those who were present." In these, with other instances, those who per-

sonally consented to the covenant, represented and acted on the behalf of others, who were not present, as well as for themselves.

It may be said, that when men authorise an agent to represent them, and covenant in their behalf, they virtually consent to whatever he shall do pursuant to that appointment. I answer. Admitting this, yet it is plain that the representatives of a State are authorised to covenant on behalf of many, who could have no voice in appointing them, such as infants, and those who are unborn. This is also the case when parents covenant for their children. Now if men have a right to authorise others to act in their name, has not God a right to authorise whom he pleases to act in the name of others in consenting to his covenant, which is not only most equitable, but greatly in favor of those who are included in it?

God has a right, as the Sovereign of the world, to establish such a constitution as, in the language of the scripture, is called a covenant, and to bring men under the obligation of it without their formal consent; and though we do not say that the bare proposal of the covenant of grace to men gives them an interest in it, if they reject it; yet God can authorise some persons to consent to his covenant on behalf of others, as well as themselves. And though all who are interested in the covenant of grace are *federally holy*, yet they have not a right of access and admission to the Lord's supper, unless they appear to be in a measure actually fit for it.

Though Mr. Emmons owns, that "the plain literal meaning of Deut. xxix. 10—13, is, that God entered into covenant with some of the Israelites who neither heard nor consented to the covenant," yet he cannot admit this literal sense for various reasons.

1. "Because it is," he says, "contrary to the nature of things that God should take men into covenant without their knowledge and consent." But this we deny, and have shewn that God and man have often taken men into covenant without their personal knowledge and consent. Nor do we find any thing to support Mr. Emmons's assertion, except his own definition, which makes personal consent necessary to one's having an interest in a covenant—A definition which scripture and common sense disapprove, and which depends merely on his word.

2. He says "God required all who were present to give their explicit consent to the covenant. But there was no occasion for all this formality and solemnity, if God could have taken

them into covenant without their knowledge and consent." This consequence we deny, and he cannot prove it. There might be occasion and good reason for this formality and solemnity, though God can take men into covenant without it. He adds,

3. "It appears from a standing statute in Israel, that God meant to take that people into covenant from generation to generation by their own explicit consent." Answer. The statute here referred to, Deut. xxxi. 9—13, proves it not. It only orders that the law be read before all Israel in the year of release at the feast of tabernacles; but says nothing of God's entering into covenant with them by their own explicit consent. This Mr. E. adds without book, or any weighty reason that we can find. And if we should grant him all that he here craves and presumes, it would not prove but that God may take men into his covenant without their personal consent, which the scriptures declare he has done.

4. "If God may enter into covenant with those who are absent, as well as those who are present, then he may take men, as well as infants, into covenant without their knowledge and consent." Answer. This is no more than is often done in human compacts. And if the covenants be equitable and advantageous to those who are comprehended, none complains, or disputes the right of those who consented to them in this public capacity. And has not God power and authority to take his creatures into covenant without their personal consent, when men have an acknowledged right to do so by their fellow men? The reason why adult persons are not ordinarily taken into God's covenant without their personal consent is, because this is the will and pleasure of God, not because God has not power and right to take whom he will into his covenant, without their personal consent, whenever he pleases. The words quoted from the *Discourse* are nothing to Mr. E's purpose, nor imply any thing inconsistent with what has now been asserted.

Our author concludes, that "When we are told God took the absent as well as the present into covenant, the plain and obvious meaning is, that he meant to propose the covenant to all, and to require all, as opportunity presented, to embrace it, and lay themselves under covenant obligations to obedience." Answer. The words do not express, nor will bear such a meaning, without departing entirely from their literal, proper and obvious import, for which no necessity appears; the reasons which he offers for this, being of no weight. Nor has he pretended to give any parallel example, to shew

that his way of interpretation is admissible. It has nothing to support it, that we can find, only he likes not the plain literal sense, which would overthrow his notion of a covenant, which, in defiance of common sense, and plain pointed language of scripture, he advances, without any thing to support it but his own assertion, which in argument is nothing. The question then is, whether scripture and the common sense of mankind ought to bend and conform to his notion; or whether his notion ought to be corrected by the standards fore-mentioned? A question, I think, easy to be answered.

## SECTION II.

HE undertakes in the next place to state the covenant of grace precisely, which he says contains neither more nor less than "the promise of God to save mankind through faith in the mediator."

This is indeed a most important part or article of the covenant. And this is all that the scriptures, which he has quoted, imply. But it cannot be admitted as a just definition of the evangelical covenant or constitution in its full amplitude and extent, nor is this in the least intimated in any of those texts he has brought to support his definition.

This covenant contains the whole revealed rule, according to which the church visible and invisible, with all the members of it, is constituted and governed by Christ. As there is an invisible government administered by Christ, in which he dispenses his saving blessings to those who are saints in heart, so the covenant is the rule, according to which this invisible government is administered, and these invisible blessings dispensed. There is also a visible government, which visible instituted churches are under; and the gospel covenant is the rule, by which those who have the administration of this government under Christ, must conduct themselves in the house of God. And as faith is required, and the condition of our right to the invisible grace and blessings of the covenant, so profession and visible expressions of faith are required, as the condition of our right to such outward privileges as are, by the covenant, granted exclusively to visible saints. It is to be observed, however, that the infants of believers are in the covenant, though incapable of complying with the conditions required of adult persons.

\*So that the covenant contains not only a promise of salvation to believers, but also a grant of outward ordinances and privileges to professors, and their children. As a believer has no

right to special ordinances unless he be a professor, so a professor is not entitled to the promise of salvation unless he be a believer. Yet the promise of salvation belongs to every believer. And every credible professor has a right, according to the covenant, to be admitted as a member of the visible church, to outward communion in ordinances; since it is to the visible church that the gospel ministry and ordinances are given. 1 Cor. xii. 28. Eph. iv. 8—12.

### SECTION III.

THE distinction between the covenant of grace, and the covenant of redemption, which is the subject of this section, we approve. The necessity or pertinency of introducing it in a dissertation on the qualifications for church communion is not so obvious. But Mr. E. seems to have had a mind to make an occasion of finding fault with the author of the *Discourse*, for which he all along shows a very good will. After quoting part of the description which I had given of the new covenant, and which he, without any warrant, represents as meant for an “*accurate definition*,” he adds, “This definition bears not one feature of the covenant of grace, but bears an exact image of the covenant of redemption. In plain terms, it is the definition of the covenant of redemption, instead of the definition of the covenant of grace.” And he says, “I have unhappily blended them together.” One might wonder what he was thinking of when this *Stricture* issued from his pen. It might be asked, how these two covenants could be blended together in a definition, which is a definition of the covenant of redemption, but bears not one feature of the covenant of grace? It is a strange way of blending, that is, mixing two things together, to take only one of them. But to pass over this, I ask, “Is the covenant of redemption founded in the mediation of Christ? Does it contain a law or rule of duty, for the church? Again, is not the covenant of grace founded in the mediation of Christ, and administered by him? Is not the church formed and governed according to it? Does it not contain a law or rule of duty for the church, enforced with penalties? Does it not establish a mutual relation and connection between covenant duties and privileges, making the one conditional of the other? Is no feature of the covenant of grace visible in all or any of these particulars? Surely Mr. E.’s understanding must have been in an eclipse when he wrote this strange *Stricture*. And this may account for the complaint he makes of the obscurity of the *Discourse*. A defect in the eye makes things appear obscure.

## SECTION IV.

FOLLOWS next, an attempt to prove that the covenant with Abraham, is not the covenant of grace. Here he goes openly into the camp of the Anabaptists, and takes his weapons from their arsenal.

He says, "The covenant of grace and the covenant with Abraham are so nearly and necessarily connected, that they are often considered as one and the same covenant." All who acknowledge infant baptism have hitherto held that the covenant with Abraham is the covenant of grace, which they have also proved by substantial arguments, which Mr. E. has not attempted to answer.

"But the definition which has been given of the covenant of grace does by no means apply," he says, "to the covenant of Abraham." Without inquiring how far this is true, I answer, since his definition of the covenant of grace has nothing but his word to support it, and has been shewn to be defective, the covenant with Abraham may be the covenant of grace, though a definition framed to serve a favorite scheme should not exactly agree with it. But if by the covenant of grace we understand the revealed constitution or rule, according to which the church is formed and governed by the mediator; and if the promises and grants of the covenant contain all privileges and blessings for the people of God, which are needful for them in their present and future state; then the covenant with Abraham, in every article, may be, and is the covenant of grace, though it contain some grants and injunctions peculiar to him and his posterity, and though some circumstantial articles might be alterable at the divine pleasure.

Mr. E. mentions a difference between the covenant of grace, and that with Abraham, in several points. 1. He says, "Faith is the condition of the covenant of grace, but circumcision is the principal condition of the covenant of Abraham." Answer. The covenant of Abraham contained a promise of spiritual blessings to true believers, as well as of outward privileges to those who were visibly interested in it. So does the covenant of grace. Circumcision was appointed as a seal or token of an interest in this covenant, which contained these promises and grants. 2. He says, "The covenant of grace respects the believer *only*, but the covenant of Abraham chiefly and ultimately respected his posterity." Answer. This we deny; it has been sufficiently disproved by those who have defended the

church membership and baptism right of infants. Mr. E. has not even attempted to invalidate their arguments, nor do we find that his own assertion to the contrary has any thing to support it but his word, which must go for nothing.

He then mentions several promises in the covenant with Abraham, which were appropriated to him and his posterity. Then we say, that the covenant of grace contained a grant of peculiar privileges to Abraham and his posterity, besides the promise of salvation through faith in the mediation. But this proves not that these peculiar grants formed a distinct covenant by themselves. These additional articles, were chiefly provisions for administering external government in a national church, to be formed of his posterity to issue from Isaac. Mr. E. calls these *appendages of the covenant*. But he gives no reason why they are not as properly *articles* of the covenant as any others. And undoubtedly they are so, while they stand in force. It is no unusual thing for a covenant or charter to contain a grant of special privileges to some, besides those which are granted to the members of the community indiscriminately.

## SECTION V.

THE subject of this section is the Sinai covenant, which it is said is founded on, yet distinct from the covenant of grace.

And the main point which Mr. E. professes to maintain is, "That this covenant required the profession and exercise of grace, as the condition upon which divine favors were promised."

Whoever have differed from him in opinion, there is nothing in the *Discourse on the Church* which discovers the author's sentiments on this point. But he pretends that I have intimated the same idea which others, whom he opposes, have expressed. And quotes some words which contain no such intimation. With this observation I might fairly pass over what he has so copiously offered on this argument. And if I should by way of digression attend a little to his speculations and arguments on this subject, the observation just mentioned may serve as a reason for touching but lightly and briefly upon it.

That more than outward obedience was required in the law, constitution, or covenant ratified and promulgated at mount Sinai, is, I think, as certain and evident, as it is that the moral law, which requires a perfect and sinless righteousness, was there given and enjoined on the people, as the rule of their duty.

But whether and how far this was required *as the condition upon which divine favors were promised*, and what was the necessary condition hereof, is the question.

Though Mr. E. does not say that sinless obedience was the necessary condition on which divine favors were promised; yet he has said what, I think, fairly implies, and obviously suggests this idea. For disputing against those who hold that divine favors were promised to outward obedience, he argues, that "obedience to the whole moral law was required." Now unless all this be required as the condition on which divine favors are promised, his argument, is inconclusive. Though perfect obedience is required, yet if divine favors are promised to some whose obedience is not perfect, then perfect obedience is not required as the necessary condition of promised favors; and then divine favors may have been promised to outward obedience, notwithstanding sinless obedience is enjoined as duty. Again he argues to the same purpose, "If the law of God requires them to be perfectly holy, then it condemned them for every external action which flowed from a sinful heart." This is a just consequence, and we may say also, then it condemned all who were not perfectly holy. But if divine favors are promised to some who have not that perfect holiness which the law requires, and so are condemned by the law for the want of it, then this argument will not prove but that divine favors may have been promised to outward obedience. All whose righteousness is not without any sinful defect, are transgressors of that law, which condemneth every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them, as really transgressors, as those who yield only outward obedience.

Now, if sinless obedience to the whole moral law was the condition upon which divine favors were promised in the Sinai covenant, then this condition was never fulfilled by any mere man; for there is no man who sinneth not, and so no one ever was entitled, according to this covenant, to the promised blessings.

But it is plain that Mr. Emmons did not think that the blessings of divine favor, were in the Sinai covenant, promised to those only who are without sin. He says, "While they continued obedient, God granted them outward prosperity," which allows that they did sometimes yield the obedience required. Again, "When the people of God fell under his rebukes, they were required not only to reform, but repent, in order to regain his favor." But if the Sinai covenant promised no favors to sinners, if it had promises for those only who continued in

all things written in the book of the law to do them, then it would be plainly absurd to suppose that repentance is required *in order to regain God's favor*; for a penitent sinner, is a sinner still, and is no more entitled to those favors which are promised to those only whose righteousness is perfect, than they who have only yielded outward obedience.

Sinless obedience then, though required in the Sinai law as duty, was not, according to Mr. E. the condition upon which only divine favors were promised. For he allows very justly, that there are promises to penitent sinners, and to such exercises of grace as are found in those who are not perfectly holy. So that in this the Sinai covenant differs not from the covenant of grace, but perfectly coincides with it. He also holds that faith in the Messiah was in the condition of the Sinai covenant, and that all spiritual blessings are comprized in the promise, that the Lord will be a God to his people. These things would incline one to think that the Sinai covenant was, or included in it the covenant of grace, notwithstanding Mr. E's two decisive reasons to the contrary; which yet seem not to be unanswerable.

But though he insists that true piety was the condition of God's promised favor, yet, according to him, *a profession of real godliness*, even when the heart was not sincere, brought the Israelites into a covenant relation to God. He is large in proving that they did profess real religion when they covenanted with God. And this their profession, gave them an interest in the covenant, laid them under its bond, and they by it became the covenant people of God, who accordingly avouched them to be his people, and himself to be their God, declaring them members of that national church to whom his oracles and ordinances were given, which the apostle says was a great advantage. Mr. E. in effect owns that those who were not sincere in their profession were in covenant with God, as well as others. For he says "when they manifested hypocrisy they are charged with breaking covenant," which could not have been true, if they had not been in and under it.

It seems then, according to him, that divine favors were promised in the Sinai covenant, upon condition of perfect obedience to the law and of repentance, faith in the mediator, and real though imperfect exercises of grace; and also of a profession of real godliness, though without godly sincerity.

These things have the appearance of inconsistency. And indeed his notions seem to have been somewhat confused and in-

digested. But instead of urging this to his disadvantage, let us try how far these different representations may consist with truth.

Let us go upon the hypothesis which many judicious divines have laid down that the Sinai covenant or constitution, taken in its largest sense, infolds or comprehends a covenant of works, injoining perfect obedience to the law of God, promising that the man who doth these things shall live in them, and denouncing a curse against all transgressors, unless relieved by the covenant of grace. Then according to the tenor of *this part* of this complex constitution, perfect obedience is the condition of life and the divine favor. This promulgation of the law, in form of a covenant, was not given to move sinners, to seek justification and eternal life by the righteousness of the law, but to shew them their duty, convince them of sin, and excite them to seek salvation with the benefits of God's favor in the way in which only it is obtainable, that is, upon the terms of the covenant of grace. Accordingly,

The Sinai covenant contains also a revelation of the *covenant of grace* promising pardon and the favor of God to penitent sinners, through faith in the promised Saviour, who was to bruise the serpent's head, whose atoning sacrifice was typified by the sacrifices under the law. *It also acknowledged the people of Israel, who professed faith and obedience to God as his holy peculiar people in covenant with him, and instituted ordinances of worship and discipline for them, and granted peculiar outward religious privileges to them, as his visible church, so that salvation was promised upon the condition of gracious sincerity in religion; and the outward ordinances and privileges of his visible church were granted to all who avouched the Lord to be their God, and themselves to be his people.*

There was also a special constitution or compact, by which they were formed and organized as a commonwealth under God as their political King. Their civil constitution was a *Theocracy*, or kingdom of God. And it has been commonly thought that God as the political King of the Hebrew commonwealth, promised them national prosperity, if they were outwardly observant of his laws and ordinances. And this opinion may be agreeable to truth, for ought that I know. At least I find not that Mr. E. has proved the contrary. However, I shall not take the trouble to examine his reasonings on this subject.\*

\* Though I shall not undertake to examine particularly the arguments with which Mr. Emmons would prove that holy obedience was the condition of all blessings, temporal as well as spiritual, in the Sinai covenant, and that it was

But he argues, that the Sinai covenant cannot be the covenant of grace, which existed long before the former, and also long since it has been abolished. But this no more proves that the covenant of grace was not included in that at Sinai, than that the moral law was not included in it. Indeed, if we take the Sinai covenant merely for that *part* of this complex constitution,

inconsistent with the perfections of God, and so impossible, that he should make mere outward obedience, the condition of any promised favors, yet there is one argument, which is, I think, sufficient to overthrow all arguments to this purpose, and that is plain undeniable FACT.

It is certainly a favor to be received as the visible people of God; in covenant with him, and so admitted to the peculiar religious privileges with which they were distinguished. Therefore the apostle owns that the Jews had a great advantage in having the divine oracles and ordinances committed to them. Now the condition upon which this favor was granted was, according to Mr. Emons, a professed consent to the covenant. And accordingly this privilege was upon this condition granted to many whose hearts were not right.

Again, keeping the passover according to the outward rites prescribed was enjoined as the condition of their being preserved, when the destroying angel cut off the first born in Egypt. And it is said, that all the children of Israel in keeping the passover, did as the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron, and so upon this condition were preserved, though many of them were not saints in heart.

Again, their going out of Egypt was the condition of their deliverance from bondage to the Egyptians. Their looking at the brazen serpent was an outward act required as the condition of their being healed; nor have we any reason to think that this mercy was shewn only to those who exercised grace in using the appointed mean of their healing. So their going into the promised land, according to the commandment of God, and subduing the inhabitants, was required as a condition of their having it in possession. And these acts of outward obedience did put those in possession who were graceless, as well as those who were upright.

But why do I mention particular instances? It is the general law of nature, according to which God governs the world, that outward actions are the appointed means or conditions of obtaining temporal blessings, both to saints and sinners.

Now, if it be not inconsistent with the character of God, ordinarily to connect temporal blessings with outward actions both of saints and sinners, it can never be proved inconsistent with his character to make known to them such connection; nay, he has done it in fact. The known course of nature makes it manifest, besides declarations in his word to the same purpose. Nor can it be proved inconsistent with the Divine character to promise or covenant with men, that if they will use these outward means, they shall ordinarily or always obtain these blessings.

Though outward acts of graceless persons are sinful, yet it is not rewarding sin, to make them the condition of their obtaining temporal favors. Care to preserve life is a mean or condition of enjoying life, both to saints and sinners. If outward actions were blessed *because they were sinful*, so that the same actions, if done in a holy manner, had no blessing annexed; this would be rewarding sin. And there's nothing absurd in supposing, that outward actions may be made the condition of temporal blessings to graceless men, who will hereafter be punished for not doing them in a holy manner. Nor is this supposition contrary to any divine declarations concerning such obedience. Let these hints suffice on a point which is only touched on, by way of digression.

which appointed temporary ordinances, ritual and civil, for the Israelites, these taken thus abstractly, and separate from the rest, were not the covenant of grace. But being connected and incorporated with that gracious constitution, by which the church is formed, these, while they remained in force, became a part of it. So a cion taken separately from the stock into which it is ingrafted, is not *that tree*; but when ingrafted in, it becomes a branch of it. But if it should afterwards be cut off, it would then cease to be a branch of that tree, supposing the tree still to remain.

And indeed, Mr. E. in effect says, that the covenant of grace was contained in that of Sinai. For he says, that the Jews were broken off from *this* by unbelief, even after its temporary ordinances had expired, and were vanishing away. And besides, the apostle says, that the Gentiles were grafted into that stock from which the Jews were broken. But the Gentiles were not taken into any covenant from which the Jews were broken, except the covenant of grace. And this again shews that the Jews, who were not saints in heart, had been in the covenant: else they could not have been broken off. I might further argue that the Sinai covenant was, or contained the covenant of grace from the promises of mercy, even spiritual blessings to penitent sinners, of which Mr. E. takes notice; and which are peculiar to the covenant of grace. But these remarks may suffice.

We shall now briefly consider the remarks with which this chapter is concluded.

1. "That it was owing to God's double relation to the seed of Abraham, that he owned and treated the Jews as his peculiar people, when they revolted from him, and became extremely corrupt." This notion of a *double relation* seems to have been invented to evade the argument with which it is proved, that the Jews were interested in the covenant, and members of the visible church, when they were scandalously corrupt. But it appears not that they were owned by God as his peculiar people on any other account than their being in that covenant, by which the Jewish church was formed. Scandalous wickedness is indeed a breach of covenant, for which a person *deserves* to be uncovenanted, and cut off from the people of God. But it does not actually uncovenant him, or cause him to be no member of the church, till he is actually rejected, excommunicated, and cut off, by the ordinance of discipline, or the hand of providence. David and Solomon, and other true saints, deserved to have been cast off for their breach of covenant. But it is

an article of the covenant that God would not take his loving kindness from *them*. So it was an article of the covenant, as revealed to Abraham, that his posterity should be a peculiar people to God, favored above others with religious privileges; that the visible church should continue with them till the promised seed should spring from among them according to the flesh. Therefore God was merciful and patient towards them, and dealt not with them according to their deserts; and though he often reprov'd and chastised them, and at length deprived them, for a time, of many of their privileges, while they were captives at Babylon; yet he did not cut them off from an interest in his covenant, and a standing in his visible church, till he had fulfilled his promise to Abraham. And then, when they had filled up the measure of their sins by crucifying Christ, and obstinately rejecting the gospel, and despitefully persecuting the christians, they were excommunicated, and no longer owned by God as his covenant people. The kingdom of God was taken from them.

A second remark is, that "the covenant of grace has always been the same. It is a covenant, in which God engages to save sinners through faith in the mediator." This is indeed, and always has been, the most important article of the covenant. But there are other articles which contain the rule of outward administration in the visible church, which have been altered as was most suitable to the state of the church, and the wise designs of God in the different periods of time since the church was formed. In his third remark he undertakes to shew what we are to understand by the different dispensations of the covenant; to this effect: They are not different articles contained in the covenant itself, which has always been precisely the same, but only different duties added to, and founded upon it, which become binding in consequence of embracing it, and which are properly termed *appendages*. But we find nothing to support any part of this assertion, no shadow of a reason for his supposing that no alteration has been made in respect of any articles of the covenant. Nor has he shewn that those duties and grants which, he says are not parts or articles, but appendages of the covenant, are not as properly articles of the covenant, as the promise of salvation through faith in the mediator. It depends *wholly* on his own arbitrary and defective definition of the covenant, [which has nothing to support it but his own good pleasure, as has been noted.] And when he says that these supposed additional duties are binding in consequence of embracing the covenant; if he means that they are immediately bind-

ing on those only who are in covenant, being as he elsewhere terms them "covenant duties," we readily consent to it, and think that being covenant duties, they are duties enjoined in the covenant, as was said. But if he means, that they are duties binding only on true believers, who have cordially embraced the covenant, and so are entitled to the promise of salvation, this is only begging the main question. Nor does his quotation from the *Discourse* favor this his notion—That some who are not saints in heart are interested in the covenant, and under its bond, has been proved before.

His fourth remark is, "there is no propriety in arguing from one dispensation of the covenant of grace to another." I grant we cannot argue that the peculiarities of one dispensation belong to another. But as to such ordinances as are designed to be standing and perpetual, we may argue from one dispensation to another. So the apostle argues the right of gospel ministers to a maintenance from that ordinance of the law of Moses, that they who minister at the altar should live of the things of the altar. However, it is a false assertion of Mr. E. that "I have endeavored to prove what the peculiar duties of believers are under the present dispensation of the covenant of grace, from what they were under the former dispensation." I purposely waved arguments from this topic, though I think they might be urged to advantage. Nor does he point to any instance of such arguing; though we shall see that he has argued in the same manner himself, which he here blames in others.

I have now surveyed the main principles on which Mr. E. builds the theory he has set up in opposition to that exhibited in the *Discourse on the Church*. It seems to be a mere castle in the air, having nothing to support it, that we can see, but the breath of his own mouth. And after all, if we should allow him the principles which he wishes to establish, they would be of little service to him; but the doctrine which he most opposes might be defended notwithstanding.

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### CHAPTER III.

**I**N the next chapter he endeavors to maintain that "None but real saints, that is, true believers, are in the covenant of grace." And he says truly, that I suppose that not only true believers, but all who are baptized (if not cut off) are in some sense,

in the covenant of grace. And this must be allowed, if they are members of the church, which has been asserted by all who acknowledge the baptism-right of infants. But he says, "If we have given a just definition of the covenant of grace, then none can be in it but true believers." And then we say, none are guilty of breaking the covenant but true believers. And the Jews were not broken off by unbelief from that covenant and church into which the Gentiles were ingrafted. But what if his definition be not just, but erroneous and defective? Then it seems his position is only an appendage of that phantom of his imagination which we have just been surveying, and may go with it, to build itself a house in the land of Shinar.

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## CHAPTER IV.

**A**N attempt to prove that true saints only ought to profess religion occupies his next chapter; a point doubtless of importance in the present dispute. Indeed the whole cause will perhaps turn upon it.

That it is the duty of christians to profess their religion is taken for granted. And I cannot but approve the practice of our churches, in admitting members to full communion upon their making a public profession of christianity, though the compilers of the *platform* did not hold such an express public manner of profession to be absolutely necessary by divine institution. They conceived that "the substance of what is required is kept, where there is a real agreement and consent of a company of faithful persons to meet constantly together in one congregation for the public worship of God, and their mutual edification; which real agreement and consent they do express by their constant practice, in coming together for the public worship of God, and by their religious subjection to the ordinances of God there." But whatever mode of profession may be thought needful or most proper, the disciples of Christ are bound to confess him before men, if they hope to be owned by him before the angels of God.

But the question is, whether any who are not true saints may or ought to profess the christian religion. If they may not, they may not come to that ordinance, in which such a profession is solemnly made. If they may, it will go far towards

proving that some such may have a warrant, and be bound to come.

The question is not, whether such may profess religion, who find that they cannot profess in sincerity, but whether, such may and ought to profess who find that they can do it seriously and sincerely, so far as they know themselves, though they are not satisfied that they have been savingly converted to God, and though it should be supposed that this may be really the case with some of them.

Again, the question is not, whether those may and ought to profess that their faith is saving who doubt or disbelieve the truth thereof; but whether, such may not declare what their religious views, dispositions, desires, and resolutions are, so far as they know themselves.

So that the subject of our present consideration lies in these two enquiries, whether those, who, after serious examination, find that, so far as they are conscious, they do sincerely believe the gospel, and approve and consent to the covenant of grace therein proposed, may and ought so to profess, though they should so far doubt of, or disbelieve their being the subjects of sanctifying grace, that they dare not profess that their faith and religion are saving?

2. Whether it be not supposeable, and credible, that some who can so profess are not saints in heart? Now I conceive that both these questions may be resolved in the affirmative.

1. They who can profess religion sincerely, so far as they know, or are conscious, may and ought to profess, whatever doubts they may have whether their faith be saving. This I believe, is agreeable to the common sense of christians. Indeed it seems to carry its own evidence with it, so much, that it is not easy to find any thing more acknowledged by which to prove it. But let it be considered.

First. It has never been proved that men are forbidden to profess religion, unless they were graciously sincere. The *wicked*, who are reprov'd in Psalm l. 16, for declaring God's statutes, and taking his covenant into their mouth, appear to have been such as were *manifestly wicked*, so that they could not but be conscious of it; besides that the words are understood by good expositors as pointing especially to teachers of religion; who were grossly and scandalously wicked.

We find further, that when men did appear to profess religion seriously and in integrity, according to their present light, they were not blamed for so doing; though they afterwards gave evidence that they were not saints in heart. Nay,

God expresses his approbation of the profession of religion which the Israelites made at mount Sinai. Deut. v. 28. "They have well said (in the Hebrew it is, they have done well) all that they have spoken." And yet the next words plainly shew that it was not thus spoken from a presumption or expectation (if I may so speak) that they would all shew they had a heart to fulfil their covenant engagements. "O that there were such an heart in them that they might fear me, and keep my commandments."

Nor do we find that Christ, or his apostles, ever forbade, or discouraged any from making a profession of their believing on him, or were cautious of admitting them into the number of professed disciples; though multitudes were not true believers. It seems that the number of Christ's disciples was so great, that the Pharisees heard that he made and baptized more disciples than John. And in what great numbers they joined to the church upon the preaching of the apostles, the history of the church in the New Testament informs us; nor do we find that any were discouraged or refused, who offered themselves; or that any are blamed for having too rashly and hastily made profession of their faith; not even when they were afterwards rejected as scandalous. If those who are so industrious in throwing stumbling blocks and scruples in the way of serious christians, who but for religious scruples would most freely and gladly profess their faith, and join in communion with the church, if they can find any rule or example in the scriptures, which gives any countenance to them, let them produce it, and it shall be attended to.

Since it is confessedly the duty of believers to profess their faith, they who find credible evidence in themselves, that they are believers, may and ought to profess accordingly. And they who are conscious that, so far as they know themselves, they do heartily assent and consent to the gospel, are conscious that they are believers in some sense; and have such evidence that they are true believers, as makes it their duty to be professors; if some who doubt whether they are true believers may and ought to profess their faith, as all allow, then such evidences as leave it uncertain whether a man be a true believer, may satisfy him that he may and ought to be a professor.

No one may profess religion who doubts whether he may or ought to do it. He who doubts of this cannot act in faith, and whatsoever is not of faith is sin. See Dr. Ames' Cases of Conscience, book I. Chap. V. Now since God only knows whether a doubting christian is a true believer, and since some doubt-

ing christians may and ought to profess their faith, the unavoidable consequence is, that some may and ought to profess religion, and may have a good and sure warrant to do so in their own conscience, when rightly informed, while it is known to God only, whether their religion be saving; and if it be granted, that any may and ought to profess religion whose sincerity is doubtful, it can never be proved that sincere christians only may and ought to profess.

The second question therefore is easily resolved: For it is evidently possible, supposable and credible, that, of those whose sincerity is doubtful, some may not be sincere christians. And if any of those doubtful characters, who yet may and ought to profess religion, should prove not to be sincere christians, the plain consequence will be, that some who are not true saints, may and ought to profess religion. So that they who maintain that, true saints only may and ought to be professors, and yet grant that some who are not known to be true saints by themselves or others, may and ought to profess religion, seem inconsistent.

And how strange an assertion is it to say, that no man may or ought to express his religious sentiments and views, till he is sure that he is a subject of saving grace. And yet this is implied in the impleaded notion. For what is expressing our religious sentiments, but professing our religion?

It is not necessary that we find an express precept requiring graceless persons, as such, to profess religion. It is sufficient to establish any point in the judgment of reasonable men, if it may fairly be inferred from what the scriptures have taught, and from those principles in which all christians are agreed, the denial of which would be attended with consequences not to be endured.

But Mr. E. endeavors to maintain that true saints only may and ought to profess religion, which he argues,

1. Because profession of religion is not a moral but instituted duty enjoined only on true saints. Answer. Though we admit the distinction between the duties of natural and instituted worship, yet profession of religion seems to be properly a duty of natural worship, and not a mere positive institution. The light of nature teaches the fitness of it. Though it is granted that professing religion, in any particular mode, instituted by God, such as sacrificing to him, receiving the Lord's supper, or the like, is a duty of positive institution. But not to insist on this. Suppose profession of religion to be an instituted duty, this proves not that true saints only may and ought to profess. Keep-

ing the Lord's day, the public worship of God, are instituted duties; and yet others, besides true saints, may and ought to attend religiously to these divine institutions. But professing religion, it is said, is the duty of true saints only. Answer. This is the point to be proved, so it ought not to be begged. Besides, if some who doubt of their own sincerity may and ought to profess religion, as all allow, then this is confessedly the right and duty of some who are not known to be saints in heart. And then it can never be proved that true saints only may and ought to be professors of religion. Mr. E. further argues, "So long as any neglect to comply with the covenant, they are not required to profess that they have complied." Answer. It is not required of any one to profess that he has complied savingly with the covenant of grace, and if one should so profess, it would not be a credible profession of religion; and it is confessedly the right and duty of some to profess religion, who do not and cannot profess they have savingly complied with the covenant, as has been observed. But "If God should require men to profess religion before they have it, he would require them to profess a falsehood." Answer. None are required to profess religion before they have it, and are conscious that they have it. But all religion is not saving religion. Many who have no doubt but that they have some kind of faith and religion have great doubts whether their faith and religion be saving. But whoever finds that he does heartily assent to, approve and acquiesce in the gospel, so far as he understands it, and knows his own heart, may and ought to profess. Nor does he in so doing profess a lie or falsehood. For while a man speaks in veracity or moral sincerity he does not lie. And his profession in the sense by him intended is not false, being by the supposition an honest expression of his own apprehensions, and not an assertion that his apprehensions are agreeable to the truth of the gospel, or the effect of saving illuminations and influences of the spirit of God. And though profession of faith, does indeed presuppose faith of some kind, as is expressed in the words so often quoted by Mr. E. yet it does not necessarily suppose *saving faith*, nor was any such ideas expressed or meant.

Upon the whole, that profession of faith, which he contends for, consisting in a professing that I am a true believer, agrees well with that notion of faith which implies a believing that I am a true believer, and should be incorporated into that system.

If Philip required the Eunuch to profess saving faith, as Mr. Emmons says, yet he did not require him to profess that his faith was saving, or that he believed he was a godly man; and

he readily baptized him upon his saying, he believed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. If he will admit all into his church, who make the same profession, he will take as "large a stride towards catholicism," as most among us.

It has been thought, by some, that such a brief and general profession of faith in Christ might be a sufficient ground of charity, when the church was under persecution, and a man's owning himself to be a christian was an act of great self-denial, exposing him to the hatred of the world, and the loss of all things. But it is far otherwise, where a profession of christianity is for a man's advantage and honor. The example of the apostles in admitting members into the church on such general professions, is not, therefore, to be followed, when the outward state of the church is so different, but a very strict examination of proponents is now become necessary; and a full, particular and punctual relation of a work of sanctifying grace should be exhibited, to render one an object of charity.

But though a profession of christianity is a greater evidence of grace, when it is an act of self-denial, than when it is not; and it is likely that the church is never more pure than when it is oppressed and persecuted, yet I find not but that the apostles observed the same rule in admitting into the communion of the church, when it enjoyed outward peace, and when they were most favored by the people, as when they were persecuted: And in particular when three thousand were admitted in one day, it appears not that the people discovered any disposition to persecute them; but it is said that they continued daily with one accord in the temple, the most public place of resort, praising God, *and having favor with all the people*. Now if the apostles made no difference in their terms of admission in times of peace, and in times of persecution, and were no more severe in examining professors at one time than another, and have given no rule or instruction to the churches to make any such difference, why should we? I know people will find plausible reasons and pretences for what they do, when they depart from the rules and practice of the apostles: but, if this is once allowed, no one knows where it will stop. The scribes and pharisees thought that Christ was not strict enough in keeping his distance from sinners. But Christ called their strictness and religious grimace, hypocrisy. And I suppose christian pharisaism is not much better than Jewish.

## CHAPTER V.

IN the next chapter we have Mr. E's description of visible saints. He says, "It is a given point, that all visible saints are proper subjects of special ordinances." If so, then some graceless persons are proper subjects of special ordinances; and certainly all proper subjects have a right of admission and access to them. That some visible saints are graceless, is evident from scripture, acknowledged by all, even by Mr. E. who says, Judas was a visible saint before he betrayed Christ, page 51. And yet we find him inconsistently arguing against this his *given point*, and endeavoring to prove, by various arguments, that *true saints only* are proper subjects of special ordinances.

He then, gives us some of his *Strictures* on the following words quoted from the *Discourse*: "It is external and not internal holiness which forms the character of a visible saint, as such," or makes one a visible saint. And again, "It must be the visibility of that holiness which is visible, that is, of external holiness, which denominates a visible saint." This I should think is undeniable, if nothing is visible in another but what is external. And that inward holiness or grace in the heart is not visible, in the sense here intended, is acknowledged by all, except those who pretend to a certain knowledge of the spiritual state of others. To this purpose speaks President Edwards, "Though true saints know experimentally what true religion is in the internal exercises of it, yet these are what they can neither feel nor see in the heart of another. There is nothing in others that comes within their view but outward manifestations and appearances." So that, according to him, there is nothing which we can discern, or have a view of in another, but what is outward; indeed we sometimes speak of grace as visible *in an improper sense*, by means of outward signs and expressions, as was particularly observed in the *Discourse*. But nothing is *really* and *properly* visible or discernable but outward, uncertain signs, which give us no assurance what a man's inward character and state is; but these outward and visible signs are *visible holiness*; and the person in whom they are found is *a real outward saint*; and his outward holiness is also a credible sign, though but an uncertain one, that he is an inward saint. So that though outward holiness, or signs of grace, be a real discernable qualification, yet as it has no known, certain connection with grace in

the heart, it cannot help us certainly to discern grace in another. At most we can only see that it is *probable*; so that signs of grace do not make grace itself visible or discernable *properly*, but only in an *improper* sense, as has been said.

We do not say, as Mr. E. absurdly represents, that "a visible saint is only a resemblance of a real saint." We say that *he is a real saint* in his kind; as much so as an outward Jew, and the outward circumcision were real in their kind. There is another kind of holiness spoken of in scripture, besides that of the heart, to which he would fain confine the meaning of the word. Though outward visible holiness is a sign of grace, yet it is not grace itself, but distinct from it. He whose profession and outward behavior resembles that of a true saint, is undoubtedly a visible saint; and has every thing which is included in Mr. E.'s *description*. He says, "Visible saints are those who appear to profess real holiness." If he means, that they are those whose profession expresses the faith and virtues of true christianity; I have no other objection, but that it allows not infants to be visible saints; if he means, that it is necessary for one to profess that he is a saint in heart, that his faith is saving, and his religious exercises and experiences are gracious; this he has not proved: nor do I find any thing in scripture which gives the least countenance to this notion. If he means that one is not a visible saint, unless he *appears*, or *is judged* to be a true saint, this is yet more absurd; for then it is the eye or judgment of the church, and not a profession of godliness, or any thing else in a proponent, which makes him a visible saint: and the same man, may, at the same time, be, and not be, a visible saint; and so may have, and not have, a right of admission, according as others may differ in their apprehensions or judgment of him. But of this, more hereafter.

Again, if a profession of real holiness, or "the appearance of such a profession," as Mr. E. speaks, makes one a visible saint, this is as much external, and as distinct from grace in the heart, as any thing which can be seen with the bodily eyes.

Upon the whole, Mr. E. blunders so strangely about his meaning, that it is hard to determine what he would have. Visible saints are those, according to him, in whom something appears which is invisible, as grace in the heart is acknowledged to be. Or if grace be supposed to be visible, in *some sense*, it is not any sign of grace, exhibited or discerned, which makes one a visible saint, but it is the favorable judgment and belief of the church. Let a man's profession and practice be ever so

contrary to the gospel, if a church believes he is a true saint, he is then, it seems, a visible saint, and a proper subject of special ordinances; but if he should exhibit ever so *good a life, and creed, and profession*, yet unless the church should believe him to be a true saint, he would not be a visible saint; and would have no right of admission. Was ever man more bewildered.

When he says that "for a man to appear to be a real saint, is precisely the same as to be a visible saint;" if he means that a visible saint is one in whom *signs of grace appear*, we say the same; and these apparent signs of grace are *visible or outward holiness*, and form a real character. But if he means that to be a visible saint is the same thing as to be *viewed and believed* to be a true saint, this is absurd, as has been shewn: a man may certainly appear to be a visible saint, according to Mr. E.'s definition, while yet he is not believed to be a saint in heart. He may be one whose *life and creed and profession* are unexceptionable, and yet some may uncharitably surmise that he is a hypocrite; while Judas's profession and outward behavior appeared unexceptionable, he was a visible saint in the view of Christ; though he did not think him sincere, but knew that his heart was not right.

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## CHAPTER VI.

AND now the airy castle, of which we have been taking a view, is about to play off its artillery. If the balloon, or to use Mr. E.'s metaphor, "*the bubble should burst*," the engineer is like to be in danger. But we hope he will escape, though his work perish.

He states the question, which is to be discussed in this chapter, in the following words: "Whether a church may admit any to communion but those who appear to be real saints," that is, saints in heart.

That we may rightly understand this question, which seems to be expressed ambiguously, I will endeavor to represent, as plainly and precisely as I can, the several senses in which it may be taken; and then give a distinct answer to each of them.

If the meaning of the question be, whether a church may or ought to admit any but such as exhibit or hold forth to their view signs or evidences of grace, it is expressly declared in

the *Discourse on the Church*, that none may or ought to be admitted but visible saints, who exhibit such evidence of grace, that, according to the gospel rule, by which a church ought to judge of professors, they ought to be held, reputed, and regarded as true saints in a judgment of charity.

If the meaning be, whether a church may or ought to admit a proponent, unless the evidences of grace, which he exhibits, *appear to them*, or be discerned by them: I answer again. They may not. But if a church, through prejudice, will not hear or attend to what a professor has to offer, and so are wilfully ignorant of it, they ought not to admit him while thus ignorant: But their wilful ignorance is no excuse for their refusing to do that, which they are bound to do, according to the rule of the gospel. Their sinful incapacity does not discharge them from their obligation, or nullify the right of a visible saint to the privilege which Christ has granted to him.

If the question be, whether in case a proponent exhibits, and the church discerns, such evidence of grace, as according to the rule of the gospel is, and ought to be judged sufficient to entitle him to their charity and the privilege of admission to communion, but the church erroneously judges that it is not sufficient, and that he ought not to be admitted upon it; whether a church, I say, while this is their apprehension and judgment, may and ought to admit such a one to communion? I answer. Such a proponent ought to be admitted; and it is the duty of the church to admit him, according to the rule of the gospel: and yet they may and ought not to act contrary to the light and dictates of their own conscience; so that till their error be corrected, and the conscience dictate agreeably to the rule of the gospel, they must unavoidably either act contrary to the law of Christ, or the dictate of their own conscience, both of which are forbidden. And they can no otherwise escape from the snare in which they are entangled, than by correcting their judgment according to the word of God, and so conscientiously complying with the duty therein required.

But if the meaning of the question be, Whether, in case one should exhibit, and the church should discern all that *evidence of grace*, which is required according to the rule of the gospel to give a right of admission; and a church has nothing to object against his profession, or his life, for which he ought to be debarred; and yet they do not believe that he is a true saint; whether they ought to receive such a professor to communion? This, as I conceive, is the point upon which Mr. E. and I dif-

fer. He says, "they must admit those, and only those, to communion whom [who] they *think are real saints*." "They must have evidence enough to *convince them*, that the man whom they admit is more likely to be a true believer, than a false professor." So that whatever evidence of grace may be exhibited to, and discerned by the church; though a man's *life and creed* and *profession* appear to them ever so good and unexceptionable, yet if through uncharitableness, evil surmisings, or any other cause, they *do not think* that he is really and certainly a saint in heart; at least if they do not believe that this is most probable, they may not receive him. "They must admit none to communion but such as they *judge to be real saints*." p. 101. "The church ought to admit none to communion but such as they *as much believe* are real, as visible saints." p. 98.

So that, according to him, it is not the evidence or signs of grace exhibited to and discerned by the church, which makes one a visible saint, and gives him a right of admission; but it is the church's *believing that he is a true saint*, and that these signs of grace are really and certainly connected with grace in the heart, which makes it the duty of a church to receive a professor.

On the contrary, we maintain that it is the evidence of grace discerned, and not the truth of grace believed by a church, which warrants and obliges them to receive a proponent to communion. If his profession and conversation appear unexceptionable, so that nothing is found in him for which the gospel rule would debar him, the church may and ought to receive him as a true saint in a judgment of charity, whether they do really and positively believe it to be certain, or most probable that he is a true saint, or not.

But before we proceed any farther, I would premise two observations, which may further open the point in dispute.

1. That we may hold and receive one as a true saint in a judgment of charity, of whom we have not such evidence as will oblige us to determine, absolutely, whether he be certainly, or most probably a saint in heart. For the judgment of charity is formed according to the rule which is given to the church, to distinguish those whom they are to admit to communion, from those who are to be refused. According to this rule, professors of true religion, who are not scandalous, are all visible saints, and to be received and held for true saints in a judgment of charity. And yet the scriptures assure us, that many of these, and no one knows how many, are not sincere. So that after it

appears ever so plain that men's lives, and creed, and profession are good, and consequently that they are visible saints, we know not whether one half of them are sincere. And if we absolutely believe that each one is a true saint, it is as absurd and unreasonable, as if we should absolutely believe that each ticket in a lottery will draw a prize; or that the first, second, third numbers, &c. will be prizes, though we know that there will be many blanks: For a man's being a visible saint, and so a proper object of christian charity, makes it no more certain that he is a saint in heart, than his having a ticket makes it certain that it will be a prize. Men may be as positive as they please in their assertions, but unless they can prove that all, or at least the greater part of visible saints, who are to be received as true saints in a judgment of charity, are also really saints in heart, they will never persuade reasonable men, who ground their belief only on sufficient evidence, that none may be received to the communion and charity of a church, but those who they have reason to *think*, or *believe absolutely*, are certainly, or at least most probably true saints.

This distinction between the judgment of charity, and an absolute belief of the good estate of professors, is plainly intimated by sundry of our approved divines. Thus Mr. Shepard distinguishes between *church charity*, and *experimental charity*, as he phrases it. Meaning by the former, that hope, which we ought to have concerning professors in general, and their children; and by the latter, that more confident persuasion, we may have of the sincerity of some, who adorn their profession in a peculiar manner. So Mr. Edwards distinguishes between the *public* and *private* judgment. And he plainly holds, that men, whose profession and conversation are unexceptionable, are to be regarded as objects of public charity, whatever suspicions or fears any may entertain from what they have observed. And the apostle acknowledged professed christians as saints and faithful brethren in Christ, that is, in a judgment of charity. And yet he expresses such doubts and fears concerning many of them, and taxes them with such gross errors and disorders, and tells them that he was afraid he had bestowed upon them labor in vain, that it seems unreasonable to suppose he absolutely thought and believed that it was certainly true, or most probable they were all true saints in heart. In short, if we are required thus to believe of all visible saints, then we must have sufficient evidence that all, or the greater part of visible saints are sincere:

And when this is made to appear, we shall most willingly admit the consequences.

2. The other observation which I would premise is, though we ought to have charity for all credible professors, yet it is not our charity which makes it our duty to receive them. But, as soon as it appears that they are unexceptionable professors, it is our immediate or next duty to receive them, and hold them for true believers in a judgment of charity. If we did think one to be a believer who is not a professor, we ought not to receive him but on a profession of religion. And if one makes an unexceptionable profession of religion, as soon as this appears, we may and ought to receive him, whatever we may fear, or suspect, or believe concerning his state. If one should think (though I know not what warrant we have so to think) that the greater part of unexceptionable professors are graceless, and therefore should not think it more probable that a professor is a true saint, though his *life*, his *creed* and *profession* appear to be good, and so he is plainly a visible saint; or if we have uncharitable surmises concerning one for which we can give no good reason, it is still our duty to receive such a professor. Nor need we wait till we have worked ourselves up to an absolute belief that he is sincere. We ought to have charity for him, and to check uncharitable thoughts. But still, though our charity should be ever so cold, yet, if we find that he professes the true religion, and is not scandalous, he is a visible saint, his right of admission is plain and certain. Our charitable judgment of him, and regard for him is not our duty; but our warrant, and obligation to receive him is complete and plain without it.

Having thus endeavored to unbowel and lay open, as distinctly as I could, the true and precise point in debate, we have reduced it to this question: Whether it be evidence of grace manifested, and discerned in a profession of true religion, not overthrown by a scandalous life, or the reality of grace believed, as certain, or at least most probable, which warrants and obliges a church to receive a candidate to full communion. Mr. Emmons, we have seen, maintains the latter, and we the former—And

First. It appears not from scripture, or any good reason, that none may or ought to be admitted, unless those who admit them absolutely think and believe that they are certainly, or at least, most probably saints in heart. Mr. E. has indeed offered several arguments to prove this. But we shall shew presently that he has failed in his attempt.

Secondly. We may argue from his own principle. He grants that "all visible saints are subjects of special ordinances," and that all whose *life* and *creed* and *profession* appear to be good, are visible saints. Therefore all such are proper subjects of gospel ordinances, and so may and ought to be admitted. But though those in whom these signs of grace appear ought to be held for true saints in a judgment of charity; yet it has never been proved that these signs, which make it certain that the person in whom they appear as a visible saint, and a proper subject of special ordinances, make it also certain, or at least most probable, that he is a saint in heart. It is certain from scripture that many visible saints are graceless. It is not certain but that the greater part may be so. If then we absolutely believe one to be certainly; or most probably a true saint, merely because he appears a visible saint; our belief cannot be supported by scripture. And such a belief is not required of us as duty; and much less is it necessary to give us a right or warrant to admit a visible saint, whose *life*, *creed*, and *profession* appear to be good, to a privilege which confessedly belongs to him as a proper subject.

Thirdly. A church may and ought to admit all who appear to be professors of true religion, and not scandalous. But some who appear to be professors of true religion, and not scandalous may not appear, or *be believed*, to be saints in heart, through uncharitable surmises. And yet, notwithstanding their uncharitable surmises, the church may have no objection of weight against their *life*, or *creed*, or *profession*. Some may not believe the sincerity of an unexceptionable professor to be certain, or most probable, from an opinion that but a small part of credible professors are sincere, as has been observed; yet so long as a man's profession appears sound and unexceptionable, and no sufficient bar to his admission is found in him, the unfavorable opinion of a church, or any of its members, is no sufficient reason for their refusing to receive him. He is evidently a *visible saint* whatever his heart may be, or whatever it may be suspected, or thought. And the gospel rule allows, and requires us to receive all such.

Fourthly. We argue, that it is not the truth of grace believed, but the evidence of it exhibited, and appearing in an unexceptionable profession, which gives a right of admission, and is good warrant for receiving such a professor from examples in scripture. God himself did acknowledge the whole congregation of Israel as his holy and peculiar people, upon

their profession of religious obedience, and owning the covenant; though he did not think their hearts were right, but knew that perhaps the greater part were a stiff necked, rebellious, crooked, and perverse generation. But if any think we cannot argue from what God has done under the Old Testament, to what we may now do; I grant that we must observe our rule; but no such rule has yet been found, as forbids us to receive any to communion, unless we verily think and believe they are true saints. And we have another example in the New Testament, which seems unexceptionable. And that is the example of Christ himself, whose life is proposed as a pattern for his disciples.

The man Jesus received those as disciples, who professed to believe on him, though he knew, by divine revelation, that many of them were not true, steadfast believers. And his example in this is instructive to us. It teaches us that we are to judge according to the rule of christian charity, in determining who are to be received to outward fellowship. And that professors of religion, who are not scandalous, are to be received, though we should have a prevailing fear; nay, though it were revealed to us (as it was to Jesus) that they are graceless.

Upon the whole, the terms of admission are, I conceive, of divine institution; that is visible outward holiness, or a profession of religion; not such a profession, as shall make it certain, or actually satisfy a church, that the professor is a saint in heart, but such as *ought to satisfy* them that he is a visible saint, and so a proper object of christian charity. Having premised this, I shall now proceed to a more particular examination of Mr. E's arguments.

It is to be remembered the question is, whether any ought to be admitted into the visible church, but those whom the church absolutely thinks, and believes are certainly, or at least most probably, true saints in heart. Mr. E. maintains the negative, by the following arguments:

Argument 1. "None ought to be admitted into the visible church, but such as appear qualified to promote the end of its institution."

If the meaning be, that none ought to be admitted, but such as shew, to a judgment of charity, that they are qualified to promote the ends for which the visible church is instituted, in this sense we grant the truth of the *proposition*.

But we deny the *assumption*, which is necessary to complete the argument, viz. They only, whom a church believes to be

certainly, or at least most probably saints in heart, appear to a judgment of charity, qualified to promote the ends for which the visible church is instituted.—For some may appear to a judgment, formed according to the gospel rule of charity, qualified to promote the ends of the instituted church, who yet may not appear to a church, certainly, or most probably saints in heart.—Churches do not always judge according to the rule of charity. And if they did, we have no sufficient reason, absolutely to think and believe it certain or most probable, that all are true saints, who appear to a judgment of charity, qualified to answer the ends of the instituted church. For then we should have sufficient reason to believe absolutely, that all, or at least the greater part are true saints, who are visible saints. All these are, in a judgment of charity, qualified to answer the ends of the instituted church. And yet since many, and perhaps the greater part are not true saints, we have no sufficient reason to believe absolutely of all, or of each one that he is certainly, or most probably a saint in heart.

Nor has Mr. Emmons proved that true saints, only, are qualified to promote the ends of the institution of visible churches; much less has he proved, that they only whom a church believes to be certainly, or most probably true saints, appear to a judgment of charity qualified to promote these ends.

He mentions several ends for which he supposes the visible church is instituted; and argues that true saints only are qualified to promote them. The first end he mentions is, “to distinguish the friends from the enemies of God.”—Answer. This must be denied. For it was never intended that close hypocrites, though enemies to God, should be distinguished from true saints in this world. Did God admit, or acknowledge the whole congregation of Israel, as members of his church to distinguish true saints from false profession, when perhaps the greater part were graceless? Did Christ admit so many, who were not true believers, into the number of his disciples, to distinguish true believers from false professors? And was it for that end, that churches are, by the rule of the gospel, to admit all visible saints, all professors of true religion, who are not scandalous, though many such are graceless? If the visible church was instituted to distinguish true saints from sinners, would Christ have given the keys of it to men, and appointed those to keep the doors, who with all their care are likely to let in, no one can say, how many, who are not sincere?—It was indeed one end of the institution of visible churches, to distin-

guish professors of the true religion, from those who profess it not. And this end may be answered, if professors only are admitted, though it should not be absolutely believed of all and each that they are certainly or most probably true saints.

Another end mentioned by Mr. E. for which visible churches are instituted is, "to display the beauty, and importance of religion." And is not this end well promoted by all professors of christianity who are of orderly conversation? It is by outward holiness only, that christians shine as lights in the world, whereby they honor and propagate among mankind the religion which they profess.

He asks, "Are they (that is graceless persons) qualified to be admitted to that holy society, which requires all who belong to it to be friends to God, to his cause, and to each other?" He expressly has granted that "All visible saints are proper subjects of special ordinances," and that some graceless persons are visible saints, and yet most inconsistently argues, that they are not qualified to be admitted into the church. I would, in my turn, propose a query or two. Is it not acknowledged by all, that professors of true religion, who are not scandalous, or that those whose *life and creed, and profession are good*, have a right of admission, though many such are not true saints? And have any a right of admission who are not qualified to be admitted? Again, has not God himself, and Christ, and the apostles admitted some who were not true saints? And did they admit any who were not qualified for admission? He proceeds. "How can the church in faithfulness to God, and themselves admit those to their fellowship, whom [who] they verily think, according to the best evidence they are able to obtain, are perfect enemies to God, to religion, and to themselves?" I answer, if they judge according to the rule of christian charity, they will not verily think thus of any one in particular whose profession is good, and who is not scandalous; though they should not think verily that it is certain, or at least most probable that he is a true saint. But if any should judge so uncharitably and unwarrantably of a professor how can they in duty and faithfulness to christ refuse one whose profession and life appear unexceptionable, and whom Christ has commanded them to receive in his name? Do they shew faithfulness to their Lord, who will not conduct themselves according his rule, but their own evil surmises? Again, was not Christ faithful to God and his cause, when he admitted so many into the number and fellowship of his disciples, whom he did not verily think to be true believers,

but knew the contrary ; and when he gave churches such a rule, and appointed such to keep its doors as he knew would, and must admit very many false professors ? And though, as Mr. E. says, the church has the right of admitting, yet they have no right to swerve from the rule of the gospel in their judgment or acts ; and they are not allowed to judge others by any other rule, than that which requires them to hold all orderly professors for true believers.

I have but one thing more to remark of this argument ; and that is, if true saints only, are qualified for admission, then where the rule of admission is faithfully observed churches will be pure, consisting only of true believers. For the rule of admission determines who are qualified for admission. Whether Mr. Emmons favours those who pretend to form pure churches or not, there are several passages in his book which favor strongly of that notion. His quotation from Dr. Butler is no more to the purpose of his argument, than the Dr. was of his opinion.

His second argument is grounded on this *proposition*: "None ought to be admitted into the visible church but those who appear to be interested in the covenant of grace." Understand this of those who are, and appear to be in the covenant of grace, as outwardly administered, and who appear also to a judgment of charity, to be interested in the saving grace, and blessings of the covenant : In this sense the *proposition* is granted—But,

We deny the *assumption* which is necessary to complete the argument, viz. Those only whom the church absolutely believes are certainly, or at least, most probably, true saints, appear to be interested in the covenant of grace—For,

1. Some may appear to be interested in the covenant to those who judge according to the gospel rule of charity, whom a church may not believe to be interested in the covenant. Churches sometimes do not judge according to the gospel rule. In this case they ought to correct their judgment, and so admit those to covenant privileges who appear, to a charitable judgment, to be entitled to them.

2. Some may appear to be interested in the covenant so as to be entitled to admission to the privileges of outward communion with a church, and yet there may not be such evidence of their being true saints, as will oblige a church to believe absolutely that this is certain, or at least most probable. Professors of true religion with their children are interested in the covenant, and yet none can say how many of them are graceless. Mr. E's notion of the covenant as including only true believers is

without foundation, and has often been refuted. Whatever is built on this has no firm support: And for men to assert that "none but real saints belong to the church in the sight of God" (meaning the instituted church of which alone we are speaking) that "to God who sees the hearts of men, there is really but one church, which is composed of the subjects of his grace;" to assert this without any thing in the shape of a proof to support it, and without touching one of the arguments to the contrary with one of their fingers seems ridiculously weak and absurd. And in discoursing of *instituted churches* to shuffle and fly off to the *invisible church*, and argue, that because this is but one and composed only of true saints, therefore visible churches, instituted and formed by God, are no churches in his sight, any further than they are composed of true believers, is most impertinent; and, I may add inconsistent in those who acknowledge visible saints are the proper subjects of special ordinances; though many of them are graceless; and till something appears to the contrary of more weight than mere unsupported assertions, I shall think the scriptures support me in saying that there is a church of *professors*, as well as a church of *believers*, and that both are visible and real societies, *in the sight of God*, formed by him according to the rules of his covenant, as is more particularly represented in the *Discourse on the Church*, and no answer has been made to it; but to proceed.

His third argument is grounded on this proposition, "The scriptures represent the spirit of God as forming the materials of the visible church." That is, "God converts sinners in order to qualify them for admission into his visible church." And therefore none are properly qualified without his special grace. It is to be observed, that the qualification here inquired for is that which gives a *right of admission*. It is needless to examine his scripture quotations: It is easy to see that they prove not that all are converted, who are so qualified as to have a right of admission. For it is granted that all visible saints, credible professors, are so qualified as to have a right of admission, though many of them are graceless. If no unregenerate men can be proper materials to compose the visible church, then God himself, and Jesus Christ formed the church of improper materials. For it is thought the greater part of those whom God recognized as his peculiar people at Horeb, and whom Christ received as disciples were unregenerate. And Christ has also left it as a standing rule to his churches, to receive all professed believers in his name, many

of whom are unregenerate, as has been observed. So that this argument proves too much, to be of any service to Mr. E. unless he means to be advocate for those who pretend to have churches composed only of true saints.

His fourth argument is grounded on this *proposition*, "The visible church from Adam to Christ was composed of those who appeared to be real saints." I answer, so far as a profession of true religion was an evidence of their being true saints, we grant that members of the Old Testament church might appear to be of this character. And this evidence we grant should appear in all adult members of the christian church. But this no more proves that none may be admitted members but such as the church believes are certainly, or most probably true saints, than it proves that we ought verily to think thus of all members of the visible church from Adam to Christ.

Though God declared his visible church whom he brought out of Egypt a rebellious people, yet he did not reject or disown them, or forbid them the use of his ordinances, but required their attendance upon them. Moses does not speak as if he believed the members of the visible church to be all true saints, when he thus addressed them, Deut. xxix. 4. "Yet the Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day." See also, Deut. ix. 7, 24, what the character of the visible church was afterwards, we may judge from the scripture history, and the writings of the prophets. If Mr. E. verily believes that they were generally true saints, and is willing to admit to communion those who appear to be no better saints than a great part of the visible church seems to have been from Adam to Christ, I think he takes "large strides towards catholicism," and sets the doors of the visible church wider open than Mr. Stoddard.

We may here observe, that though he will not allow others to argue the qualifications for communion with the christian church, from the qualifications of church members under the Old Testament; and repeatedly tells his readers, that I have used this weak argument, that this is our dernier resort, &c. (though this argument is never once urged, nor mentioned in the *Discourse on the Church*, as he represents, but was designedly waved) yet he is as ready as others to adopt the same argument, when he thinks it will serve his cause. I had thought, for some reasons, not to have availed myself of what might be urged from this topic, if he had not by his example encouraged me to touch upon it.

His fifth and last argument is built on this proposition, "The apostles admitted none into the church but those who they supposed were true believers."

Answer 1. We are willing to grant that the apostles supposed all adult persons whom they admitted to be true believers, *in a judgment of charity*. But this does not imply that they did *absolutely believe* that all and each of those whom they admitted were certainly, or most probably of this character. For the evidence of grace on which the judgment of charity is founded, and persons were admitted into the church, being only a profession of faith, the apostles were sensible that this was too uncertain, to support such an absolute belief of the good estate of all and each of those professors. When they address christians as saints and faithful in Christ, they often seem to express what Mr. Shepard calls *church charity*, hoping and presuming on the sincerity of their profession, declaring their *public judgment* of them, as Mr. Edwards speaks, that they were church members in good standing, who are all in a judgment of charity, and in the public account of the church, received and reputed as true believers.

2. Sometimes the apostles appear to address the better part of professors more especially, who had given higher evidence of their sincerity, than an ordinary judgment of charity does or need to proceed upon in the admission of church members. They speak of them as eminent christians, "filled with the fruits of righteousness, to the praise and glory of God." But those who give lower and more doubtful evidence of sincerity may have as unquestionable a right of admission as any. If the apostles, in addressing the better part of professors, express a strong confidence of their good estate, we cannot conclude, from this, that they had the same confidence with respect to all, as they had for some. Or that they had reason to have so much confidence in the sincerity of any *when they were first admitted into the church*, before the sincerity of their faith was manifested by its growth and good fruits. And if we read the epistles, and find what errors and irregularities some in the churches had fallen into, and what doubts, and jealousies, and fears the apostles express concerning some, calling them *foolish*, and *bewitched*, and *carnal*, *walking as men*, *not obeying the truth*, &c. we shall find that they did not think all the members of churches worthy of those high commendations, and expressions of charity, which we sometimes meet with.

3. Though we allow that the apostles did judge of the qualifications of professors according to the rules of the gospel, and had charity for all proper objects, and received them to their fellowship, yet we cannot so easily allow that churches always regulate their judgment, and exercise their charity as they ought. So that granting that the apostles admitted none but such as they supposed were true saints in a judgment of charity, yet it is no just consequence that a church may and ought not to admit any but such as *appear to them* to be true saints; that is, as Mr. E. explains himself, such as they *really and verily think* are certainly saints in heart, or at least, that this is most probable. For our churches may not be so right and regular in their judgment, nor of so charitable a disposition as the apostles. And besides, there may be a judgment of charity in favor of a professor, without such an absolute, and positive belief of his good estate.

There is no need of considering those many texts of scripture which he has collected to prove that the apostles supposed professors to be true believers. We allow, they received them as such, in a judgment of charity. The dispute is about the consequence he draws from this fact. This he has not proved, but leaves it to shift for itself.

So that the point he undertook to maintain is so far from being "*absolutely settled*" according to his mind, as he vainly pretends, that we find nothing of any strength to support it. If it is settled, it seems to be settled against him. Settled like a sinking building for want of a good foundation.

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## CHAPTER VII.

HOW Mr. E. has succeeded in his attempt to prove that none but real saints ought to come to the Lord's supper is now to be examined.

The right of access, which is now to be inquired into is, a warrant to profess christianity, ask admission to the privileges of full communion with an instituted church, and, upon admission, use these privileges. All and only those have this right or warrant of access, who have and discern such qualifications as are a sufficient reason for their coming, and which their own conscience approves, or judges to be sufficient. Therefore, no

qualifications which are not discerned, however real and important, can give one a right of access. For nothing can be a reason of action to any one, or judged to be a good reason, while it is not discerned or known to be true. Whether grace be necessary or not, as a foundation of our warrant to come to the Lord's supper, it is no reason for coming in the view of conscience, while it is not discerned; and so gives no warrant, no right to come any farther than the evidence of it is apprehended by us. It is something which we find, and discern, and know, which gives us our right to act in this case.

If it be held that true saints only may and ought to come to the Lord's supper, then none may come who doubt whether they are true saints. For none may come, who doubt whether they may or ought to come; for in so doing, their own conscience must condemn them for acting presumptuously, and without a sufficient reason in view. They cannot act in faith, while they doubt whether the action be lawful and warrantable. "And whatsoever is not of faith is sin." God, and a rightly informed conscience, allow us not to do what we doubt the lawfulness of doing.

But it is acknowledged by all, and so is *taken for granted*, that some who doubt whether they are true saints may and ought to profess christianity, and come to the Lord's supper. Therefore some who *are not known to be true saints*, may have, and discern such qualifications, as are a sufficient reason, and warrant for their coming, and which they may justly account sufficient.

Now if some who are not known to be true saints may and ought to come, and are bound in reason, in duty, and conscience so to do, and so have a right of access; it can never be *made to appear* that grace is necessary as a foundation for a warrant of access. If such evidences of grace, as make it only credible or probable, that a person is a true saint, may be sufficient to satisfy him that he may and ought to come to the sacrament, as having stronger reasons for coming than refraining; and if it can never be proved that all who have such credible or probable evidences of grace are true saints, then it cannot be proved but that some who are not true saints may have stronger reasons for coming, and such as may put it out of reasonable doubt that they may and ought to come, and consequently have a right of access.

If any should think that though true saints only have a sure warrant and right of access, yet a man may and ought to come

if he finds reason to hope and think it most probable that he is a true believer, though he has not assurance ; I answer. To say a person *may come*, is exactly the same thing as to say it is *lawful* and *warrantable* for him to come. Now, if one who finds not certain, but probable evidence of grace *may come* to the Lord's supper, then uncertain evidence of grace gives a certain right of access; and then *it cannot be maintained*, that true saints only have this right, unless it can be maintained, that *uncertain* evidence is *certain*, which is absurd; or unless it be said that a man *may come*, though it is *uncertain whether he may*, which is also absurd.

Upon the whole, if probable evidence of grace be sufficient to give a warrant of access, as is granted by all; and if merely probable signs cannot be proved to have a certain connection with the truth of grace, or to be a certain evidence of it, then *it cannot be proved* that true saints only have a right of access.

It is in vain to say that a christian must find *good*, that is *sure signs* of grace in himself, though he may doubt whether what he finds in himself be a sure evidence of his being a true saint. For if the goodness of his warrant of access depends on the goodness or certainty of his evidences, then a right conscience will not approve it, or judge it sufficient, or allow him to come to the Lord's supper, unless the goodness as well as the matter of his evidences be discerned; and when one discerns the reasons of his hope to be good and sure, he can no longer doubt of his good estate.

They who hold that grace is necessary, but assurance is not necessary, to give a right of access, lay down a rule which can be of no use to direct one who doubts of his state. Such a one must be as much in doubt whether he may attend special ordinances, as whether he is a true saint; if it be said that he may come, if he has a prevailing hope, this is plainly giving up the point, and acknowledging that a graceless person may come, if he has, as no doubt many have a prevailing hope of their good estate. If it be said that one may come, if he has good grounds of his hope, these good grounds, if they are such as true saints only have, no doubting christian can determine whether he can find in himself. But if the good grounds of our hope mean any thing which a graceless person may have, then a graceless person, if he finds in himself such reasons of hope, may have a sufficient reason or warrant for access. It might be added, that if a prevailing hope must be grounded on a greater probability of a person's being a true saint, it appears not how a doubting christian

can know whether this be the case with himself; since no rule has yet been found by which this doubt can be resolved.

So that when all is done and said, this alternative will still force itself upon us: Either none may or ought to come to the sacrament but such as have an assurance of hope, or it cannot be maintained that true saints only may and ought to come. They who assert that true saints only have a right of access have, to their honor, disowned the necessary consequence of their principle; and chosen rather to run the hazard of being inconsistent, than deny that any doubting christian may or ought to come to the Lord's supper; they have chosen to say that they *may* and *must* come, that is, have a *warrant* and are *bound* to do so, though upon their principle no one knows that they may or ought to come; and their doubting conscience allows them not, but forbids their doing it upon their peril; Mr. E. indeed has a scheme of his own, different from all that I have seen, though not more consistent. But as we find nothing of any strength or solidity to support it, the friends of truth have comfortable hopes, that it will soon be swept away, with other cobwebs of like stuff.

We shall accordingly now consider his arguments to prove that true saints only may and ought to come to the sacrament.

His first argument is to this effect. None ought to come to the Lord's table but those who may and ought to make a profession of religion. But true saints only may and ought a profession of religion.

I answer. Though we grant that none have a right of access but those who may and ought to profess religion, yet we allow not, that true saints only may and ought to be professors. Nor has Mr. E. proved this, nor can he, unless he can prove that none may profess religion, but those who are assured of their own godly sincerity, as has been shewn in considering his fourth chapter, whither the reader is referred for an answer to his arguings in support of this his tenet; where also he may find some reasons in support of the contrary position. And though the belief of the heart is presupposed in the profession of the mouth, this does not imply that a *saving belief* must be presupposed. And though profession of faith goes before a *right of admission*, this does not imply that profession of faith must go before a right of professing, which is an *act of access*, and a step taken in our coming to the Lord's table. So that the words he has quoted are nothing to the purpose of his argument.

His second argument is grounded on this proposition,

“None ought to come to the Lord’s supper, but those who are in the covenant of grace.”

The assumption is, true saints only are in the covenant of grace. But this we deny, and have shewn that this notion is unsupported by scripture, contrary to scripture, and the consent of those who hold the divine right of infant baptism, who have always taught and maintained that the children of believers, though unregenerate, are interested in the covenant, and under the outward administration of it. Mr. Emmons’s assertions to the contrary (for he hardly offers any thing which can properly be called an argument) have already been considered.

He then quotes a passage from the *Discourse on the Church* purporting, that it is the duty of those who by cordially consenting to the covenant of grace, have taken the bond of it upon them, to use the special ordinances. But it is not said, or intimated, or meant, that this is the duty of those *only*, whose consent to the covenant is cordial, or in gracious sincerity. Some are in the covenant of grace, besides those who have cordially complied with it. And these may have a right to the privilege of outward communion, consistently with what Mr. E. has here quoted.

It may be observed, that he says, “The duty of attending the sacrament, is a *covenant duty*.” How this could be said by him consistently with his asserting, that the covenant requires nothing but faith, and that ordinances are no parts, or articles of it, I understand not.

His third argument is built on this thesis: “None ought to come to the communion table, but those who are qualified to enjoy communion there with Christ, and his friends”—meaning spiritual, holy communion, which true saints only enjoy: And since such only are qualified for it, it is concluded, that such only may and ought to come.

If it had been asserted, that none ought to come, but those who find credible signs and reasons to hope that they are so qualified as is expressed, this might have been admitted. But as it has been shewn, that our right or warrant to come to the Lord’s supper, arises not from any inevident qualifications, but from reasons which are, and are judged sufficient; and that whoever finds reason to hope that he is in a measure qualified for spiritual communion with Christ and his friends, has a right and warrant to profess his faith and the reason of his hope, to ask admission, and upon admission come to the holy supper, though it may not certainly appear what his inward state, and qualifica-

tions are, the proposition therefore is denied ; and cannot be maintained unless it can be proved that true saints only, find such reasons of hope respecting their qualifications, as will warrant and oblige them to come to the ordinance. The necessary consequence of which, will be, that no doubting christian may come ; and since this consequence is *confessedly false*, the proposition from which this is fairly and necessarily interred, is false also.

That unbelievers are unqualified for spiritual communion with Christ and his saints we grant. But if such may have hopeful, though doubtful evidence of sanctifying grace, then they may have more reason to come than refrain, as has been argued, and is acknowledged.

To what he adds at the close of this argument, I would say ; an Egyptian might have no warrant to keep the passover, however friendly to Israel, and the God of Israel, if he found no reason to think he was commanded to do it. But the Israelites, who had reason to think that this was enjoined on them, had reason to think it was their right and duty to keep the passover, though many of them were graceless. Regular church members, in full communion, have as good reason, for ought that appears, to think they are commanded to partake of the Lord's supper, whatever their inward state may be, as the Israelites had to think they were commanded to keep the passover. But such as are not members of an instituted church, though true saints, have no more reason to think they are commanded to partake of the Lord's supper, till they become church members, than an Egyptian had to think he was commanded to keep the passover.

Mr. E's last argument is comprehended in the following syllogism.

None ought to come to the Lord's supper, but those who have some good evidence of inward sanctification. But true saints only have any good evidence of inward sanctification. Therefore, &c.

If he means by *good evidence*, such evidence as may be a just foundation for a comfortable, though not an assured hope, in this sense, and in this only, we have expressly granted his *proposition*, in the words he has quoted. But then we do not grant his *assumption*, that true saints only have such evidences of inward sanctification, as may be a just foundation for some comfortable, though uncertain hope, nor do we find any sufficient proof of it.

But if by *good evidence* he means certain evidence, such as true-saints only have, then we grant his *assumption*, that no graceless person, has *such* evidence of inward sanctification: But then we deny his *proposition*, viz. That none may, or ought to come to the Lord's supper but those who have certain evidence of inward sanctification.

So that the point in debate is, whether any graceless person has, or can reasonably be supposed to have, any credible evidence of sanctifying grace. This Mr. E. denies. "No graceless person," says he, "can have *credible* evidence of sanctifying grace in the view of a rightly informed conscience." p. 108.

Let us now consider what he offers in support of this position. He says "God has given every man, an infallible rule by which he may ascertain his own character. And it requires nothing but an impartial application of these [scriptural] marks to himself, in order to any person's forming a true judgment of his own character. Every good man may know, if he examines impartially, that he is a good man." I answer. Though every good man has grace, yet it is not always so sensibly in exercise, as that he can know, upon examination, that he is a good man. For though the signs of grace, as described in scripture, are certain, yet every good man cannot, by examining himself, however impartially, know, or certainly determine, whether what he finds in himself, be those marks of grace which are described in the word of God; and some good men discern that in themselves which may justly cause them to fear and suspect, their sincerity in religion. And an impartial examination of themselves, would discover the reasons they have to doubt their good estate. Grace in the heart can only be discerned by its sensible exercises. But it is not always sensibly in exercise. And when it is, the actings of it may be so weak, and so clouded, defiled, and as it were disguised by indwelling sin, that a christian may not be able, by self examination, to know what his state is. This sentiment is largely asserted and illustrated by Mr. Edwards, in his *Treatise on Religious Affections*. As his book is common with us, and the passage is something lengthy, I shall only recite a few of his words, near the beginning of the third part. "No such signs are to be expected as shall be sufficient to enable those saints certainly to discern their own good estate, who are very low in grace. It is not agreeable to God's design, that such should know their good estate. Nor is it desirable that they should. There is a two-fold defect in such a saint, which makes it impossible for

him to know certainly that he has true grace by the best rules and signs that can be given him.

"First, a defect in the object or qualification to be examined. Not an essential defect, but a defect in degree. Grace being very small, cannot be certainly discerned and distinguished. Secondly, a defect in the eye, &c." And however blameable christians are, when the exercises of grace in them, are so low that they cannot be certainly discerned, yet they are not blameable for doubting of their state, when they discern no certain evidence of it in themselves. And however sure the rule is by which they examine themselves; yet many, for the reasons above intimated, cannot certainly determine, upon the most impartial examination, whether what they find in themselves answers to the rule; or whether "their views and feelings be such as God has ascribed to saints."

Nor has Mr. E. proved, that every good man may know, by impartial examination, that his state is good. For admitting that "He has exercises of grace, which (if known to be such) are real (certain) evidence of his good estate," how does this prove that every one who has such exercises can know that what he, upon impartial examination, finds in himself is an exercise of grace, or a certain evidence of his good estate; when, as Mr. Edwards says, grace being very small, cannot be certainly discerned and distinguished.

Mr. E. adds "A graceless person has no real evidence of grace." I answer. Though such a one has no *certain* evidence, yet that he has no *real, credible, hopeful* signs of grace, Mr. Emmons has not proved, and it never will be proved to eternity, unless it is proved that there are no credible, probable or hopeful signs of a good estate, which one may have and discern in himself, except what are a certain infallible evidence of it, which no reasonable man surely will undertake to maintain. And though he who concludes certainly that his state is good, merely from probable and doubtful evidence "deceives himself," yet this cannot be said of him, who, finding hopeful, though not infallible, signs of grace in himself, judges that he has reason for a comfortable, though not assured hope; and accordingly hope, in proportion to the reason for it, which he discerns. And though a graceless person has no true love, repentance, faith, &c. as Mr. E. says, page 111; yet this proves not that he is wholly destitute of the evidence of grace. There may be hopeful, credible signs; where there is not the truth of grace. And these signs may be visible to a man's own conscience, as well as to the church; unless we absurdly say, there

are no hopeful signs of any beginning of a work of grace, but such as are infallible evidences of a good estate; and that no one may entertain the least degree of hope of his own sincerity, short of full assurance, as has been said. Exercises of grace, discerned and known to be genuine, are indeed the only certain evidences of a good estate, in the view of a right conscience. And if any one absolutely determines that he is a true saint, without finding such evidences in himself, he judges unwarrantably, and is in danger of deceiving himself. But there are hopeful signs which are not infallible marks. And a right conscience may judge that there are such reasons of hope as it discerns; and though these will not make the reality and certainty of his good estate fully to appear, yet these may be a rational foundation for a degree of comfortable hope of one's sincerity in religion. And if such a hope, grounded on such evidence, is a sufficient warrant for his professing religion, and coming into the communion of a church; then a right conscience will judge accordingly, and approve the warrant, though it will not positively determine what his state may be.

But Mr. E. says further, "Every graceless person has clear, full, positive evidence, that he is graceless." p. 78. 111. But upon the most careful examination, I can find nothing to support this his assertion. He repeats, and inculcates it, and takes it for granted very confidently, as his manner is, and draws consequences from it. And this is all that I can find of any importance. He says, "since every graceless person is graceless, he not only may, but must know it, unless he deceives himself." But this consequence we deny. And we find nothing to support it; though we grant that there is a real and most important difference between a true saint and sinner, yet he has not proved that this can always be clearly and certainly discerned, by the eye of man. Unless he can make it appear, that there is some certain, positive mark of unregeneracy which is found in every graceless person, and that every such person may, and must always certainly discern it in himself, and know it to be an infallible evidence of an unregenerate state, unless he judges contrary to reason and evidence; he says nothing to the purpose of proving that every graceless person may, and must know himself to be graceless, unless he deceives himself.

However "destitute of holiness" a man may be, he cannot know this to be his case, unless he finds certain evidence of it. But what evidence of this has every graceless man? Suppose he finds not any known and discernable exercise of grace: this is frequently the case with good men: otherwise they could

never doubt of their own sincerity. It would be impossible for those to doubt of this, who were conscious of such exercises as they knew to be gracious. A want of sensible exercises of grace, therefore, does not make it certain that one is in a graceless state. Again, suppose one finds himself "full of sin;" Neither is this a certain evidence that he is graceless: for true christians have a greater sense of their own sinfulness than others, causing them to cry out with the apostle, "I am carnal, sold under sin."

A rightly informed conscience will not judge one to be certainly, a true saint unless it find certain evidence of it. But it will not judge one to be certainly graceless, though he finds not such evidences in his own favor as he knows to be certain and infallible. If he finds that, so far as he knows himself, he does sincerely believe, and approve, and endeavor to obey the gospel; and that his conversation is, in some good measure, conformable to its rules; it appears not what certain evidence such a one has that he is graceless. There are such signs of sincerity as a right conscience will allow to be of considerable weight, and such as may warrantably encourage some comfortable hope, though they may leave the mind in doubt.

And though Mr. E. says, "If the conscience of any graceless man be rightly informed, and attend to all the evidence arising from the exercises of his heart, it will pronounce him a total enemy to God;" yet as he offers nothing in proof of this his assertion, so I presume it cannot be proved to be universally true, unless it can be made to appear that there is not only a real, but also a *discernable* difference, *in all cases*, between the views and exercises of the regenerate and unregenerate, whereby every man might always be able certainly to know what his true state is.

But how groundless and unreasonable is such a supposition. There may be the seeds of grace in a man, which his own conscience, when as well informed as it is the will of God that it should be, may not be able certainly to discern and distinguish. For as Mr. Edwards says, "It is not the will of God that christians, who are weak in grace, should be able certainly to discern and distinguish it." And there may be also fair imitations of grace, which the most judicious and experienced christians cannot certainly determine, when they discern them in themselves, whether, or how far they are genuine. Hence it is so common a case, that christians, who have the most satisfactory evidence of their own sincerity, are not able to determine certainly, or to their own satisfaction, the time of their first conversion. It is

a weak and vain fancy, to think that men can always discern and distinguish all exercises of grace from all resemblances of them, even in themselves. And it shews men to have a slight and poor acquaintance with their own hearts when they pretend to any such thing. It is mere quackery to pretend to distinguish common from saving grace in all cases, by feeling the pulse of our hearts, or to split the thread exactly between the exercises and expressions of common and saving grace in every instance, so as certainly to distinguish the one from the other, in our own experiences. God never intended that we should be able to do this; and it is best we should not be able to do it. We may hope comfortably, so far as hopeful signs appear, but not rest satisfied till we have made our calling and election sure, and given all diligence to attain to the full assurance of hope.

As many, who are the subjects of sanctifying grace may discern in themselves dangerous marks of reigning sin, so many who have apostatized in the day of temptation, have had hopeful signs of a good work begun in them. They have received the word with joy, and it has had such an effect upon them, that they have for a time escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of Christ, and yet they have been again entangled and overcome. They have been enlightened, tasted of the heavenly gift, been partakers of the holy Ghost, they have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, and yet have fallen away without recovery. I fear they are but dangerous guides, who encourage men at once to entertain an assured persuasion of their good estate, merely from those good feelings, and exercises of heart, which they think they find in themselves in their religious frames. It is not so easy a matter for us to know our own hearts, and what manner of spirit we are of, as such imagine.

But supposing that every graceless person might know himself to be graceless, if he did discern all the evidence of it, which is within his view, and which his conscience, when *fully enlightened*, is capable of discerning; yet as the characters of men are mixed, so good signs and bad signs are blended together; and we can no otherwise judge than according to the light and evidence we have and discern. And the conscience may be *rightly informed*, so as to determine what may and ought to be done, *according to the light and evidence we have, and must conduct ourselves by, till better appears*; though we may not know that it is *fully informed*, or that we actually discern all the evidence, which we might discern, if we gave

all that attention we were capable of, and were not blinded by any improper bias.

The question then will come to this, whether one, who, upon serious examination finds, that, so far as he knows himself, he does sincerely believe the christian religion, and consent to the covenant of grace, and knows of nothing in himself which would prove him to be graceless, has not reason to hope that he is sincere, though he knows not but that if he did actually discern all that in himself which conscience, *fully informed*, might discern, he might possibly judge differently of his character and state. And whether such a one has not *reason to judge*, or, which is to the same effect, whether his conscience may not rightly judge that he may and ought to profess religion and come to the Lord's supper, rather than refrain because he is not assured of his good estate.

If he may not, then no doubting christian may or ought to come. For no doubting christian, while such, does, or can know but that there may be something in himself, which he might be capable of discerning (though he is not conscious of it) which might convince him that he is graceless. *If he knew that this was not the case*, he could no longer doubt his good estate. But it is granted by Mr. Edwards, that a man is bound in reason and conscience to conduct himself *according to what appears to him to be the best and strongest reason in this case*. It is also granted by all, that doubting christians may come to the sacrament; which is the same thing as granting that they may have a warrant or right of access. Taking these points for granted, as they are, the case seems to be resolved, and Mr. E's assertion sufficiently refuted.

As to what he adds at the close of the chapter concerning the misapplication of commands, I shall only say; when he will prove that all graceless persons are as *positively forbidden* to come to the Lord's supper, as believers are required, a point which he chuses rather to take for granted; and when he will give scriptural marks by which all graceless persons may know themselves to be such, then we will grant that he who either comes, or neglects to come, in obedience to the dictates of an erroneous conscience, is guilty of a sin of ignorance; but it is not a misapplication of a command to have an obediential respect to it, when we find probable reasons to think it to be enjoined on us.

When men doubt whether a command is enjoined on them, they must, as Mr. Edwards says, "act according to the best of their judgment." For a man to act contrary to the dictates of

his own conscience, though erroneous, is certainly a known presumptuous sin, which is more dangerous than to offend ignorantly.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

WE now come to the long chapter of *Strictures*, which is divided into ten Sections.

### SECTION I.

CONTAINS *Strictures* on the account given of visible holiness. We had a specimen of those before, in the fifth chapter.

We had described a visible holiness as a discernable, external, and real character, or qualification. It is *discernable*, for that is what we mean by visible. It is *external*, for nothing is *properly* visible or discernable in another but what is external. Grace in the heart is *properly* and certainly visible to him alone who searches the heart, though it may be said to be visible in an *improper sense*, when such outward signs are discerned as are supposed to be often, though not always, connected with it; by means of which the credibility, or probability of it may be seen, though the certainty of it cannot. It is a *real character*. For nothing can be truly and properly discerned but what is real, though the credibility, or probability, of that which has no real existence may sometimes appear.

What then is this discernable, outward, and real qualification, which makes one a visible saint, or forms his character as such? I answer. It consists partly in that *relation to God*, which arises from being in covenant with him, by being outwardly and visibly separated from the rest of the world, and dedicated to him. This is commonly called *federal*, or *covenant holiness*; so the children of Israel being in covenant with God, were all federally holy. And on the same account the members of instituted churches are all holy, not excepting their infant children, as the apostle testifies. Besides this outward relative holiness, there is an *outward inherent holiness*, which consists in a profession of true religion, with an orderly conversation. These visible outward qualifications form a real cha-

racter, and constitute the subject *a real visible saint*. Such are really in covenant, really dedicated to God outwardly; really professors of religion, really orderly in their outward behaviour, &c.

This outward holiness above described is also *a sign or expression of inward holiness*. An outward visible covenant relation to God, is a sign of an invisible relation to him. Profession of faith and repentance is a sign of inward faith and repentance. The consent of the mouth is a sign of the consent of the heart, a good life is a sign of a good heart. But as these signs are *not certain*, so they do not ascertain the truth and reality of grace in the heart; or render it *properly visible*, or discernable. They can only manifest its *credibility* or *probability*. When therefore we speak of inward holiness as being visible or discernable, the word is not used in its proper sense, as when we say that outward holiness, which is the sign of it, is visible, but we mean no more than that the *probability* of inward holiness is manifested. So that it is *only in a figurative and improper sense*, that grace in the heart is visible. But if we speak properly, it is visible to him only who knows the heart.

But the gospel rule, by which we are to conduct ourselves towards others is, that in a judgment of charity, we hold and receive, visible saints, for saints in heart; professors for believers; those in whom signs of grace are discerned, for gracious persons. We are, I say, thus to receive them in a judgment of charity, hoping and presuming the best, according to the hopeful evidence in their favor, which appears in them. Not that we are bound *positively to believe*, all and each visible saint to be a subject of sanctifying grace. No; for we know that visible holiness is but an uncertain sign of a sanctified heart. We know, from the testimony of the scriptures, that many visible saints, in whom signs of grace appear, are graceless. So that though we ought not to *judge* any visible saint to be an hypocrite, yet it is no breach of the gospel rule of charity to *doubt* of some, and be jealous over them, and to fear whether a great part of them, may not be found false professors. This is as plain a representation as I could give in brief of *that notion of visible holiness*, on which Mr. E. has made his *Strictures*, which promise to set it in a true light.

1. He says, "If visible holiness exists, out of the mind, and may be seen by the bodily eye, then it is as easy to distinguish visible saints from visible sinners, as to distinguish large men from small." Answer. Doubtless visible saints may be distinguished from visible sinners; but some things which may

be *certainly* seen and distinguished are not so *easily* distinguished as others. Cannot a church distinguish a professor of religion who walks orderly, from one who professes not, and lives scandalously? Cannot they distinguish signs of grace, from expressions of wickedness? It is not said however, that this can be done merely *by the bodily eye*. That is his own paraphrase, which he has unwarrantably inserted to misrepresent my meaning and impose upon his readers. I only said, *visible holiness might be seen and discerned*, and its reality ascertained. He adds,

2. "To say that visible holiness is something distinct from the mind *and to be seen by the bodily eye*, is as contrary to the dictates of common sense, as to say, that visible reason or visible love, are objects of sight." Answer. To say that visible holiness is discernable, and that whatever is properly discernable is real, is, I think, not contrary to common sense. And this is all that I have asserted. What is in the heart is visible only in an *improper sense*, as has been said. As for "*visible love and reason*," if we mean a *proper visibility*, as we do when we say that outward signs of grace are visible and discernable, I, for my part, have no proper and certain discernment of these things in any man's mind and heart, except my own. Indeed I can discern plain *signs and expressions* of both, in others, though there seems to be but little of either of them, expressed in Mr. E's *Strictures*. What follows is only a repetition of that capital mistake of his, which has so miserably bewildered him; that *there is no kind of holiness but grace in the heart*, which, without the least shadow of proof, he nakedly asserts, though the contrary is as evident from scripture, as it is that there was an *outward* as well as *inward* circumcision: as certain as that the Israelites in the wilderness were an holy people, being in covenant with God, though their heart was not right with him, and they were not steadfast in his covenant: as certain as that the children of believers are holy, though many of them are unregenerate. As certain as that there are visible saints who are not inward saints. This has been accordingly the concurrent sense of the church. And it is hard to imagine what a man could think of himself, to oppose his own *mere assertion*, against all this, and much more, which might have been mentioned, an *assertion*, unsupported by any thing which looks like an argument. To content himself with gravely saying, "the truth is," so and so, some will be apt to think is ridiculous.

3. He adds "If the Doctor's account of visible holiness be just, then we can have no evidence of the internal holiness of

any person or being besides ourselves." This consequence, (which we deny) he endeavors to support as follows: "According to this supposition, there may be the reality of visible holiness, where there is not the reality of internal holiness. Supposing, then, that we should be able to ascertain the visible holiness of any of our fellow men, we could by no means infer from the visibility of their visible holiness, the reality of their internal holiness." Answer. Visible holiness, though it is not an infallible evidence of grace in the heart, and so does not *ascertain* the reality of it, yet is a credible evidence, and the only evidence of it which we can discern in another; the only evidence on which a judgment of charity is grounded. A profession of faith and repentance, and consent to the covenant is not a certain evidence that the professor is a saint in heart. Does it follow that it is no credible evidence of it? He adds, "Supposing we should be able to ascertain the visible holiness of the divine being, we could not thence infer the reality of his internal holiness." How shocking is this? To say that the discernable manifestations and expressions which God has made of his holiness (which is all that can be meant by his visible holiness) are no certain evidence that he is a holy being; as if because men are often hypocrites, who exhibit a false shew of holiness, we might reasonably suppose the same of the divine being.

How far signs of grace are of a moral quality, we need not enquire. However; that which has no moral quality, may be a hopeful evidence of grace. It is no virtue in a person to be a child of a believer, and so interested in the covenant, and to have a religious education; and yet if those promises are to be relied on which intail a blessing on the seed of the righteous, and declare that a child trained up in the way that he should go will not depart from it, these advantages are hopeful signs that the subject of them is, or will be a subject of inward sanctification.

He concludes the section with saying, that "external holiness (as described in the *Discourse*, and by which he says, p. 96, the author means signs of grace) is no more a sign of inward sanctification than outward wickedness." "That a church composed of such visible saints [that is such as exhibit signs of grace] exhibits no more evidence of true holiness, or real piety than a church composed of visible sinners." Did ever more palpable absurdity flow from the pen of any man?

In no part of Mr. Fummons's performance has he, in my opinion, made more miserable work than in this section. It

has been a matter of patience to attend to it ; and to save my patience and that of the reader, several passages, very remarkable, have designedly been passed over without notice.

## SECTION II.

HE next gives us his strictures on this sentiment. "That visible saints, though destitute of grace, have a right in the sight of God, as well as in the sight of men, to come to the table of the Lord." He calls this my opinion. But I own it not, as here expressed. My opinion was plainly expressed, *Discourse* p. 36, to this effect. It is only the right of admission which any have in the *sight of the church*, or which is visible to them. All who have a right of access, or a right to come to the Lord's table, have this right in the sight of God, and in the sight of their own conscience, but not in the sight of men ; because this right lies out of their sight, and it belongs not to them to judge of it, but only the right of admission. Simon Magus had a right of admission in the sight of God, and the church, and accordingly was admitted agreeably to the rule of the gospel : But whether one has a right *to come*, is a matter which lies out of the sight of men, who cannot search the heart.

He quotes a passage from the *Discourse* purporting, that professors of true religion, who are neither scandalous, nor conscious of hypocrisy, are visible saints, and so far interested in the covenant in the sight of God, that they have a divine right outwardly to use special ordinances. If they have any interest in the covenant, it must be in his sight who sees all things. Mr. E. has expressed the same sentiment very fully, when he said, "It is a given point that all visible saints are proper subjects of special ordinances," of which, notice has been taken before. But he here sets himself to refute it ; and his great argument is only this : If he has given a just definition of the covenant, then only true believers belong to it, and have a right to any of its peculiar blessings. But an argument built on that erroneous definition, must be very weak, and so I leave it.

He then quotes some words, importing that saving faith is the condition of access to those blessings of the covenant which belong to its invisible administration ; which he compares with another passage, in which it is said that the belief of the heart is presupposed to profession, and profession of faith goes before *a right of admission* to church privileges. And he has strained and tortured these passages to extort from them a meaning which was never expressed nor intended. As if because pro-

session of faith, which gives a right of admission, presupposes *faith*, therefore no one can be a professor, or have a right of admission, unless he has *saving faith*. The Israelites at mount Sinai, Simon, and many others, had such faith, and made such a profession, as gave them a right of admission, though they had not saving faith. As to the *right of access*, the quoted passage says nothing. And his saying "I have allowed that *saving faith* is a condition of the covenant, which must go before a *right of admission*, to external communion," shews that he has not attended to his subject, or to the *Discourse* which he has made the object of his *Strictures*, so as to understand them. His notions are superficial, and confused. The quoted passages, it may easily be seen, are so worded that he can get no advantage from them.

He then observes truly, that "I distinguish between the visible and invisible administration of the covenant." This distinction is no novel invention to serve a particular scheme, as he afterwards suggests; but has a plain and solid foundation in the scriptures, and has been constantly received and approved in the reformed churches; but, he says, "this amounts to the same as dividing it into two covenants." But no shadow of evidence is offered in support of this: Nor has he shewn what *inconsistency* there is in supposing that the same covenant may contain promises of different privileges, and upon different conditions, but contents himself with suggesting weakly that it is *inconsistent*.

What he says of my professedly drawing my arguments from the Mosaic dispensation has been noticed before. But he says "the Jews were called a holy people because they professed to love God, and exhibited public evidence that they were inwardly holy"—And what is such a profession but outward holiness? not holiness of heart, of which many of them doubtless were destitute. And Deut. ix. 7. 24. xxix. 4. shews that they were not called a holy people because they were all believed to be saints in heart. They were holy as being in covenant with God; tho' their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant. Ps. lxxviii. 37. They could not have been justly taxed with *unstedfastness in the covenant* of God, tho' their heart was not right, unless they had been *taken into covenant*. And tho' it was not taken for granted, or asserted in the *Discourse* that the condition of the Sinai covenant was visible external holiness; yet since Mr. E. grants that they were taken into covenant upon a profession of godliness, which profession was only *outward holiness*, and many who were taken into cov-

enant were destitute of inward holiness, I think we may now take it for granted by Mr. E. at least, that the condition upon which they were received and owned by God as his people, according to the Sinai covenant, was outward holiness. It is true he has also denied this ; but if he will be inconsistent, who can help it ?

I find nothing more in this section which need be noticed, except his saying that those external duties which he calls "appendages of the covenant" belong only to true saints ; and so the distinction between the visible and invisible administration of the covenant, is not only groundless, but utterly fails of answering the sole purpose for which it was invented." I presume he will find it hard to say by whom it was invented, or for what purpose. But what I would observe is, that all this is said, as almost all his singular assertions, without any thing which looks like an argument to support it ; he has only modestly begged the question. Indeed this is a striking trait which marks his performance from beginning to end. He cannot, or will not dig, but to beg he is not ashamed.

### SECTION III.

THE chief matters contained in his next section have been considered, in examining our author's sixth chapter. It has been shewn, that to say an object is *visible*, expresses a different idea from saying that it *appears*, or *is judged* to be such an object. Every thing which is seen is indeed visible ; but not every thing which is visible is seen by, or appears to every one to whom it is visible, or capable of being discerned. And some judge otherwise of persons and things than they visibly are. Some are judged to be visible saints, who are not such ; others, who are really visible saints, are judged not to be such. This seems too obvious to need to be insisted on. It has also been shewn that a church may *warrantably* receive all whom they *ought* to receive. And they ought to receive sound professors of true religion, who are not scandalous, though, for want of charity, they should not believe them to be true saints. That credible evidence of grace, exhibited and discerned, and not the reality of grace believed (or in other words, the charitable thought or judgment of a church) gives a professor a right of admission, and makes it the duty of a church to receive him, and exercise charity towards him ; so that, as it is expressed in the words quoted by Mr. E. "God has not made it necessary for us to believe that men are truly pious, in order to its being our duty

to admit them. We are allowed, nay, required to admit credible professors, be our opinion of them what it may."

It is a gross mistake in Mr. E. to say, that I supposed this would sound like a paradox. No such thing was ever said, or intimated. So far from it, that I thought, and still think, that it must appear indisputably true to all men of middling discernment. And that to suppose that the charity or uncharitableness of a church, is that which must determine *what they ought to do*, and whether a professor ought to be admitted, was too big and palpable an absurdity for any reasonable man to imagine. I should almost think it lost labour to pretend to reason with one who is so wrong-headed, as deliberately to give in to such a wild notion.

If, as Mr. E. says, "he might with propriety deny the infants of believers to be visible saints," then he might with propriety contradict the apostle, who tells believers expressly, "your children are holy." And again, "If the root be holy, so are the branches." We grant, that they are to be reputed *real saints* in their kind; that is, really the subjects of federal holiness, as being *really* in the covenant. But it does not follow that we are bound to believe absolutely, that they are all real saints in the sense intended by Mr. E. that is, saints in heart, though this may be charitably hoped; nor has he said one word to support this his inference.

He says again, that "I hold external holiness may appear where there is no appearance of inward piety." This is another great misrepresentation, if by appearance of inward piety he means signs of grace; since I constantly hold, external holiness, even the federal holiness of infants, to be a hopeful sign, since the covenant includes believers and their children. Then after reciting several sentences expressing this sentiment, he adds, "here the bubble breaks and vanishes." I suppose he must be sensible, by this time, that the bubble he speaks of was blown up in his own brains. If I did not begin to be a little acquainted with Mr. Emmons, I should be astonished that any one should have the face to say, that I did not hold visible holiness to be a sign of internal, when no such thing was ever intimated, but the contrary constantly asserted, in the most plain and pointed language. Though outward holiness appears in different degrees, yet every degree is a hopeful sign, but there is no degree which is an infallible evidence of inward sanctification. But he argues, "If the church have evidence of external holiness, then they have the same evidence of internal." Answer. The evidence we have of the latter is not the same, nor equal

to the evidence we have of the former. The sign is certainly and properly visible, grace in the heart cannot be certainly discerned. *It is visible only in an improper sense* ; since there are outward signs which have a known and certain connection with it. When I hear one profess true religion, I may *know* that he is a *professor*, a *visible saint*. I have a proper and certain discernment of this ; but I cannot properly and certainly discern, whether he be a *true believer*, though I have also hopeful evidence of this. For professors are often, though not always true believers. And though we sometimes speak of grace as being visible, yet this is true only in an improper sense : We only mean that it appears *credible* or *probable*, as has been explained.

Though outward holiness appears in different degrees, yet the lower degrees may be properly and certainly discerned, as well as the higher. There may be more signs of grace in one than in another. But we may be as certain that a professor of religion, who is not scandalous, is a visible saint, though but a weak professor, and though we may see reason to be jealous over him, as if he exhibited high degrees of visible holiness. And after Mr. Emmons had asserted that some visible saints are not saints in heart ; that Judas, for instance, was for a time a visible saint, it seems strange that he should yet roundly affirm that " The church ought to admit none to communion, but such as they as much believe are *real*, as *visible* saints. And that they are no less certain of their real, than of their visible holiness." What can be more inconsistent ? The sentence which follows next after the words last quoted shews again that he is liable to make mistakes in reporting facts. He says, that " I observe that taking visible saints collectively, there is a presumptive evidence, that each individual is a hypocrite." This is so far from being true, that I have said expressly, " I know not but that the greater part of visible saints may be sincere." And the assertion of those who have said, that much the greatest part of visible saints are graceless is mentioned with disapprobation, as rash.

But he says, " Supposing a church may have reason to doubt of the sincerity of professors in general, yet they have no reason to doubt of the sincerity of one who gives clear and striking evidence of real piety." I answer. Though that of which we have not certain evidence may be held as doubtful in some degree ; yet I grant that some give such clear and striking evidence of piety as is exceedingly satisfactory, and leaves little room to suspect their sincerity. But *such a degree* of evidence

in favor of a person is not necessary in order to his being undoubtedly a visible saint, and an object of our charity. For we find the apostle expressed great jealousy, and doubts, concerning some whom he acknowledges as members of the church, as was before observed.

I grant, however, that a church, judging merely from *what appears in a professor*, may have more evidence of his sincerity, than signs of hypocrisy. And if what Mr. E. has quoted to this purpose, comes fully up to his sentiment, as he says; I think it may easily be made to appear, that it is not inconsistent with what was quoted by him a little before, "that we never shall be able to determine, till the day of judgment, whether there be a preponderating probability in favor of a professor." For though the evidences of grace, which *appear in him*, are supposed to outweigh the evidences of a graceless state, which may *appear in him*, and consequently judging merely from *what appears in him*, it is most probable that he is sincere; yet there is *other evidence* in the case, besides what *appears in him*; evidence which the judgment of charity makes no account of, as not being admissible by the rule of the gospel *in foro ecclesiæ*. And that is, the testimony of the scriptures, that many visible saints, who give clear and striking evidence of real piety, many whose life and creed, and profession are good, so far as the church can discern, many whom they are evidently bound to receive as true saints, are yet graceless, compared to foolish virgins, who have taken their lamps without oil in their vessels. And we know not how many will be found to have been of this character; and so cannot determine whether this might not turn the scale of probability against a professor, notwithstanding the hopeful signs which appear in him; if we could estimate the weight of it, and were to take it into our account.

In this manner I had carefully explained my meaning; and now I can freely leave it to the intelligent reader to judge, whether what Mr. E. calls my concession and assertion, do not harmonize. And whether his taking no notice of the explanation which was given, is acting the part of a fair and manly disputant, or a caviller.

In answer to what was argued, that the irregular and erroneous judgment of a church, does not nullify *his* right, who exhibits such qualifications as give him a right of admission, or release them from their obligation to admit him; Mr. E. says, that "God has given the church, imperfect as they are, the right of admission, [admitting,] and they must see with their own eyes." I reply. God has given the church a rule according to

which they are to exercise this right; but he has given them no right to swerve from this rule, either in admitting or rejecting. And though they must see with their own eyes; they have no right to wink against evidence, or blind, or spoil their eyes with prejudice.

He then argues as before, that a church must be inwardly convinced of the real piety of every one whom they admit to communion. That they would be unfaithful to Christ if they should admit any who they suppose are his enemies. Answer. If they are faithful to Christ, they will judge according to the gospel rule, which allows us not to judge those to be enemies, who give such evidence of being his friends as the gospel rule requires, to give a right of admission, though we should not be fully convinced, by uncertain evidence, that they are his friends. He argues further, that church members cannot love as brethren, as they are required, unless they verily believe each other to be friends of Christ. I answer. A profession of christianity, not discredited by a scandalous life, is a sufficient foundation for that brotherly love, which the gospel requires of christians towards each other. If they are of a charitable spirit, they will judge charitably of such professors, and receive them as brethren, as the gospel rule requires. And this they may do, though they should not absolutely conclude what their inward state is, from evidence known to be uncertain.

If we ought to exercise charity towards all visible saints, we have a *plain, certain rule*; for we may know that all sound professors, of orderly conversation, are visible saints; though we know that many of them, and know not how many are graceless. And to ground our brotherly love on visible external holiness, is the same thing as grounding it on the evidence of inward sanctification; since visible, external holiness, is all the evidence of inward sanctification which christians can discern in each other.

Mr. E. thinks this a *singular rule of charity*; that is, to hold those for objects of charity, in whom signs of grace appear; for this, he truly says, is what I mean by external holiness, and that it consists in a profession of true religion, not discredited by scandalous errors or practices; and that this is the most dangerous error in the *Discourse on the Church*. I cannot but think it to be not only truth, but a truth of great importance: and though it be generally acknowledged, yet that it has not been so distinctly considered, in its consequences, by many, as it ought to be; which if it were, it might be a good clue to lead the consciences of christians, out of that perplexing labyrinth

in which some have entangled them; and correct that dangerous mistake, in which some have been too much encouraged, of setting up unscriptural rules for judging the state of professors, and making things, terms of christian communion, for which their is neither precept nor example to be found in the scriptures, or in the primitive church. And also, that it might help to shew, that those who have been supposed to differ in opinion respecting the qualifications for admission to church communion, differ very little in the rule by which they profess to conduct themselves; both professing to open the doors of the church to all, and only those, who make such a profession of faith and repentance, that in a judgment of charity, they ought to be received as true christians.

#### SECTION IV.

IN the next section we have a repetition of what Mr. Emmons had offered in the latter part of his seventh chapter, and which we have already examined. We refer the reader to the remarks on that, for an explication of our opinion, with the grounds of it, and a reply to his arguings—and shall only add, that we find ourselves strengthened in this point by the suffrage of President Edwards. He has declared his judgment, not only that some, who doubt whether they are saints in heart, may, and must, and are bound to come to the sacrament, which implies that they have a right or warrant to come as has been noted; but has also declared, “that a person, whose public profession of religion, expressed the cardinal virtues and acts implied in a hearty complianee with the covenant of grace, had a right to be received as the object of public charity, though he should scruple his own conversion, and say he did not think himself converted.”\* Whoever professes that he does not think himself converted, professes that he does not view himself as a saint in heart. And if such a one has no right to come into the church; then they who have the evidence of his own confession, that he does not so view himself, have full evidence that he has no right to come to the sacrament. And then it is unlawful for them to receive him; for this would be consenting to his doing what he had no right to do, which would make them partakers with him in his sin. And if Mr. Edwards has sometimes seemed to express a different sentiment, yet it should be considered that he has repeatedly published his

\* Preface to his Farewel Sermon, and Answer to Williams, p. 8.

judgment to be as above represented ; that he explained his opinion in this manner very particularly and expressly, before a council, as he says, and inserted it in his last publication on the subject, as expressing his most ripe and deliberate determination, after revolving the subject in his mind, for several years, with great attention.

I shall not detain the reader with more particular observations on this section, as I find little or nothing contained in it, but what has been before considered.

## SECTION V.

Mr. E. has not fairly represented the “notion” which he has made the object of his *Strictures* in this section. It is not positively said in the chapter and section he has referred to, nor in any other part of the Discourse, that “Sinners have as good a right to partake of the sacrament as to attend any other religious duties ; but the assertion is only conditional. If any such are rightful church members in full communion, then it appears not but that they may as lawfully partake of the Lord’s supper as attend other religious duties.

It is indeed plainly suggested as the author’s opinion, that there may be many graceless persons of this character—that this seems to be generally supposed—that the scriptures countenance the supposition—that the contrary cannot be proved. But further than this I have not presumed to determine. But it was expressly said, that none but rightful church members, might partake at the Lord’s table. And Mr. E. will grant, that rightful church members may come. What need, what fitness was there then in his bringing again upon the carpet a question which had been fully argued before ? It was a very different question, which I was considering in the place referred to, viz. whether a rightful church member, who doubts his own sincerity, has more reason to refrain from coming to the Lord’s supper, lest he should partake unworthily, than he has to refrain from other religious duties ? And it seems Mr. E. objects not to the answer which was given, upon the footing upon which the case was put : But, he says, that the unregenerate ought not to come to the sacrament, and sets himself to argue this point over again, out of order. But at this rate, when shall we get to the end of the argument ? And how often must we go over the same ground ?

It is true there is an order in duties. A man may not be a communicant till he is a professor ; nor a professor till he is a believer. But there are some professors, and believers, and

church members; some who have been acknowledged as such by Christ and God himself; whose faith was not saving, as has been before observed.

He adds, "The celebration of the sacrament necessarily involves profession of love and union to Christ. This is the narrow of the point." I answer. This had been distinctly attended to in *Discourse*, p. 101, 102. Nor has Mr. E. invalidated what was said in answer to this objection. So little reason had he to say, that I declined "looking the difficulty directly in the face." And I add further, that Mr. Edwards, and others, who profess to agree in sentiment with him, in fact allow, and encourage some to come to the sacrament, who do not, and cannot profess that they have saving love and union to Christ. So that I see not but that this difficulty must bear as hard upon them, as upon us.

But he seems to be troubled at something quoted in the margin from the last mentioned author, asserting, that it is the duty of the unconverted to attend the means of conversion; a point on which he says "I had been once and again refuted." But suppose I have been refuted ever so often, still it cannot be denied, that Mr. Edwards, and the generality of those who agree with him in sentiment on the qualifications for church membership, hold with me on that point. I might therefore in arguing with them, urge this as a point in which we both agreed. Nor are the quoted words "unguarded expressions," as Mr. Emmons pretends, but supported with solid reasons. It is testified also by those who had a long and intimate acquaintance with Mr. Edwards, that he was constantly of the opinion expressed in the forementioned quotation. And however Mr. Emmons may think it has been refuted, the greater part of judicious christians think otherwise. As to what he objects, that the unconverted must needs lie, if they profess religion, it has been answered before.

It seems, I think, pretty extraordinary to be censured for "reducing the duty of attending the sacrament to a level with other religious duties," by those who hold, that the unconverted, while such, have no more right, or warrant to pray, or read, or make the least attempt in religion, than they have to come to the Lord's supper. Let the common sense of christians say, whether this is not reducing religious duties to a level.

As to what he has suggested, which he thinks "bears hard against my own scheme." I answer. He who knows himself to be graceless, may not come to the Lord's supper; because he cannot profess, assent and consent to the christian religion in

moral sincerity. Such a profession is implied in receiving the sacrament: and whoever can thus profess in veracity, cannot know that he is graceless. And if one cannot attend any other duty, without making such a profession, as one who knows himself to be graceless, cannot make in moral sincerity, then one who knows himself to be graceless ought not to do it. But according to *my scheme*, no such profession is implied in attending the common means of religion; as is also observed by Mr. Edwards, *Humble Enquiry*, p. 115. A man must be but a superficial speculatist to stumble, and not be able to get over such a straw as this.

## SECTION VI.

WHETHER the Lord's supper be a converting ordinance, is not a case of conscience, but a mere speculative question; as much so as if it were inquired, of what use is water baptism to an infant? God's ordinances are adapted to answer the ends for which they were instituted; whether we are able, or not, certainly to determine what these ends are; it is our duty to attend those ordinances, which God has enjoined on us. What special ends they are designed to subserve, it is not so much our concern to know.

In the *Discourse on the Church*, some things were suggested in favor of the position, that the Lord's supper might be designed as a mean of conversion to such church members as are not savingly converted. But as I did not find that the point was clearly determined in the scriptures, and it seemed not to be of great practical importance, it was still left as a problem, of which nothing was positively decided. This modesty and caution, it was thought, would not be blamed by men of candor. But Mr. E. is a man from whom nothing of this kind is to be expected. He exclaims at it, as *very singular and extraordinary*, that I should "hesitate in bringing out my *supreme point*, on which, he says, the great subject of controversy between the Stoddardeans and Edwardians, as to terms of communion, *rests*." But as I profess myself no party in that controversy, nay, have declared my dissent from both parties in some things, I see not how I am concerned in this reflection of Mr. E. My conclusion may stand, I conceive, however this problem may be resolved. Besides, some will think it a *singular* observation that a controversy should rest on the *supreme point*, or conclusion, in which it issues. The common way of building is for the higher parts, the *supreme point*, to rest on some foundation, and not for the whole body of the structure to rest upon the top, or

*supreme point.* Mr. E. indeed, seems to have constructed his scheme in the way he has here intimated ; that is, without any foundation for it to rest upon. That the Lord's supper is a converting ordinance may be a *natural inference*, from Mr. Stoddard's doctrine, respecting the terms of communion ; but it is not the foundation on which it *rests*. And if it be supposed unlawful for a graceless person to come to the sacrament, as Mr. E. holds, this will not prove, *upon his principles*, but that it may be a converting ordinance, as well as attending upon the word of God, or any other means of religion ; For he holds, that it is unlawful for a man to attend on any ordinance of religion, while graceless, as well as come to the sacrament ; and yet I suppose he will not deny but that there are converting ordinances.

But he asks, " If it be not a converting ordinance, why should I write a book to prove that unconverted men ought to attend it ?" I answer. 1. I have not maintained that persons, known to be unconverted, ought to attend, but those only in whom hopeful signs of grace appear ; and all allow that these ought to come. If some of these are graceless, yet so long as this appears not, it can be no reason for their not coming. 2. I know not but that the Lord's supper may be a converting ordinance to visible saints, who are unconverted. But however, I am fully satisfied that all who can profess religion in sincerity, so far as they know themselves, and are not scandalous, may and ought to come to communion. 3. If the Lord's supper be not a converting ordinance, yet good ends may be answered by visible saints coming to it, though graceless. Hereby the profession and outward ordinances of the gospel may be kept among a people, that the visible church may not be dissolved, but may remain as a light in the world, a city on a hill, " to call men both by example and instruction to attend to it, and by the form of religion ever before their eyes, remind them of the reality of it."\* Other good ends, unknown to us, may, perhaps, be subserved. So that it is very weak and unreasonable in Mr. E. to say, that by speaking doubtfully to this question, I have given up all that is of any consequence in the dispute.

But Mr. Emmons has formed a shrewd argument from my doubtful answer to the forementioned question. Says he, " If the Doctor, after studying the subject, and writing a long discourse upon it, cannot yet determine whether the sacrament be a converting ordinance, who can ? He has had the advantage of Mr. Stoddard's arguments, [N. B. I never saw any of his

\* Doctor Butler.

writings on the subject,] and of his own long, close, and penetrating attention to this single point; and yet, after all, cannot determine in his own mind, that the sacrament is a converting ordinance. The Doctor's uncertainty, in these circumstances, amounts to a violent presumption, that the sacrament is not a converting ordinance."

I have ventured to look this argument in the face. One might easily retort it, if it were worth while to amuse one's self with trifling. But if the cause he has espoused has no better arguments to support it, or if it needs such supports, I doubt it is likely to run low.

But he says, "There is great harm and danger in maintaining that the Lord's supper is a converting ordinance." Answer. 1. There seems to be no danger, if it be admitted that graceless persons may be rightful church members, and have a right of access to this ordinance; and it is only on this supposition that the point was argued. 2. Nor do I see what danger there is in believing the Lord's supper may be a converting ordinance, *even upon Mr. E's principle*, that it is not lawful for the unconverted to attend upon it. For it is also, according to him, unlawful for any to attend upon the preaching of the gospel, while unconverted, and yet there is, I conceive, no harm or danger in believing the preaching of the gospel to be a converting ordinance.

I heartily agree with him, however, that "it highly concerns the leaders in the church to be very cautious on this interesting point." To keep as close as they can, to the gospel rule, neither making any thing a term of communion, which, according to this rule, is not necessary, nor dispensing with any thing which appears to be necessary.

## SECTION VII.

WHAT Mr. E. has advanced to disprove the church membership of infants has been considered in our remarks on his second chapter, which treats of the covenant of grace. His opinion so is contrary to plain and pointed scripture testimonies, to the concurrent judgment of all christian churches, except the anabaptists is supported by such weak reasons, and has been so often confuted by solid arguments, none of which he has attempted to answer, that my remarks on this section will be short.

Though I have expressly said that adult persons are not admitted into the church upon the same terms with infants, "that a profession of the christian religion is necessary to give a right

of admission to an adult person." And Mr. E. himself, says, p. 20, that, "I suppose that none but infants can be taken into covenant without consenting to the covenant," yet he here insinuates, that I have built my arguments concerning the terms of communion on the church membership of infants: If the reader will be at the trouble to examine all the places Mr. E. has referred to, in which the church membership of infants is mentioned, he may see that nothing more is argued from it than what is asserted in scripture, acknowledged by all christians, even by himself, viz. that graceless persons may be visible saints, and church members. But on what terms adult persons are to be admitted to full communion, I have no more argued from that topic than did Dr. Watts or Mr. Edwards. And it was very unfair in him to suggest such an idea to his readers.

It is true I did take the church membership of infants for granted; and I had a right so to do. For *granted it is* by all with whom I supposed myself concerned, even all who acknowledge infant baptism, as Mr. Edwards says. And if this point was not argued in the *Discourse*, yet others had proved it abundantly; yea, I had also published something on the subject; so that I have not neglected to support my opinion, as Mr. E. impertinently asserts.

As to what he alledges, I answer. Though infants are not brought into covenant by their own act, yet they are by the act of their parents, who are authorized to covenant for themselves and their children; and by God, who has so constituted the covenant, that the bond and privileges of it extend to both, as has been often demonstrated.

The anabaptists, we conceive, are wrong in denying the church membership of infants; but they are consistent with themselves, in refusing to baptize them. Mr. E. with an inconsistency and absurdity peculiar to himself, baptizes them, though he has given up the only solid foundation for it.

## SECTION VIII.

THE discussion of the question concerning partial communion was professedly waved in *the Discourse on the Church*. But as I had expressed my consent to the result of the synod at Boston, in the year 1662, Mr. E. has made this an object of his *Streictures*. How he discovered that I supposed what I there hinted might settle any dispute relative to that point (a thought which never entered into my heart) I leave to the consideration of others: Though I see not why it might not as well settle that

point, as his *Strictures*, which have pretended to settle many disputed points by mere *ipse dixit*, without the shadow of a reason.

He says, "I take for granted the main points from which I argue." I answer. So does every one who pretends to argue. Can there be any arguing, unless some principles are supposed to be mutually agreed to? I suppose whatever *appears to be granted* may warrantably be *taken for granted*. Now the question is, what are those things which are taken for granted? and had I a right thus to take them? Mr. E. mentions these following: "That those who are baptized in infancy grow up members of the church." I answer. I have shewn that the church membership of children *is granted*; and that they continue members till they are some way excommunicated, is self evident; and *is granted* by all protestant churches; and expressly by Mr. Edwards, who says, "Some who were baptized in infancy, even after they come to be adult, may yet remain for a season short of such a standing as has been, spoken of, [that is full communion] and yet not be cast out of the church, or cease to be, in any respect, its members." *Humble Enquiry*, page 1, 2. This, therefore, may warrantably *be taken for granted*, that those who are already members may be members without a new formal admission, I think never was, or will be denied by any reasonable man. This, which is the second point mentioned by Mr. E. I have surely a right to *take for granted*. That church members will continue members, until they are *formally* excommunicated is not taken for granted. But it is *granted* that they may continue members, when adult, though not in full communion, as has just been noted, "That they have a right to remain in doubt as to the real state of their mind" is not taken for granted. But that which is as sufficient for my purpose *is granted* by all, and very fully by Mr. Edwards, viz. that a christian, being in doubt, as to the state of his mind, does not disqualify him for continuing a member of the church. This appears from fore-quoted passages. Upon these principles, *which are granted in fact* by all with whom I supposed myself concerned, my reasoning on this head, it seems, is acknowledged to be good.

But Mr. E. to clear the coast thoroughly, denies them all, "having endeavored to prove that no infants can belong to the church." But as he has failed in his attempt, and we find scripture, and the judgment of the church, are against him, his unsupported denial moves us not.

He adds, "Before we can admit one to partial communion, we must find a scripture warrant to separate what God has join-

ed together, namely, baptism and the Lord's supper." One would think that he ought to have found some warrant for this, before he separated these ordinances, as he does, in baptizing infants, whom he admits not to the Lord's supper. "But these ordinances as they respect the adult, he says, stand on a level. The qualifications for the one, are the same as the qualifications for the other." But this is contrary; not only to the general sense of our churches, but also of all the protestant churches, and of the ancient church, as has been proved by Mr. Mitchel, who has shewn by testimonies, "That the churches of Christ in all, and especially in the best ages, and the choicest lights therein, both ancient and modern, have concurred and met in this principle, that baptism is of larger extent than the Lord's supper, so as that many, that are within the visible church may have baptism for themselves, or at least for their children, who yet ought not presently to partake of the Lord's supper, or who do, at present, want actual sinners for it." Answer to the Apologetical preface, p. 27. Nor has Mr. Emmons hinted any thing in support of this his assertion. And yet he is the man who has taxed me with cheaply taking principles for granted, when I did not pretend to be arguing a point, and when the mentioned principles are *granted in fact*.

## SECTION IX.

THAT the Jewish church was a mere type of the christian, Mr. E. has unwarrantably asserted to be my opinion, though I never once said, or intimated, or thought so. Nor do I know that this sentiment has been adopted by any diviner, or that any use has been made of it, in the sacramental controversy, though some have argued from the church under the Old Testament dispensation, to the church under the christian dispensation, supposing that the church was one and the same for substance in every age of the world.

The words he has quoted from the *Discourse*, speak not of the *Jewish church*, but of the *Hebrew commonwealth*, or civil state, which was a kingdom of this world, as all civil States are. But it was an earthly theocracy, or kingdom of God, so was a type or figure of the heavenly theocracy, the kingdom of heaven, the church of Christ. David seated in the throne upon the holy hill of Zion, was a type of Christ ruling his church, &c. This is a common sentiment among christians; nor do I know that "it is denied by any:" Nor have I "taken it for granted," though I have mentioned it as my opinion; nor have I pre-

tended to maintain it ; much less to improve it as the foundation of my whole scheme, or any part of it, or built any thing upon it ; nor have I once mentioned it, or hinted at it, in the whole Discourse, after I had mentioned it merely as an illustrating parallel to something, which is no matter of controversy, viz. that all who are interested in the covenant, are members of the church. In short, Mr. E. seems to have been in a dream, while he was writing this whole section, and disturbed by a mere phantom of his own imagination.

## SECTION X.

IN the last place we are presented with such a general view of the *Discourse* as he has thought fit to give.

His compliment upon the author does as much honor to his own candor and generosity, as it meant to do to the person who is the object of it. But some are apt to take things by the wrong handle. Such may perhaps suppose that this was only a piece of low cunning commonly used by insidious calumniators, who will give one a few fair words, when they are aiming to give a murderous stab. But intelligent readers will take his expressions of civility as they were meant.

I. Several defects are mentioned in the *Discourse*, which he says “are hardly veniable.” They must be very bad faults to justify so hard a censure from one, who himself, probably, needs some favorable indulgence.

The first defect he mentions, is, “a certain obscurity of expression, method, design.” How it may appear to others, I know not. But this fault, if real, was undesigned, and so I would hope more pardonable. But, as Bishop Butler observes, “Those only are judges, how far this is a fault, who will be at the trouble to understand what is said, and to see how far the things insisted on, might have been put in a plainer manner.” As Mr. E. has not been at this trouble, I challenge him as an incompetent judge.

The second defect mentioned, is, “want of proof.” One would think that he, of all men in the world almost, ought not to hold this to be an unpardonable defect. For I think it will not be easy to find a controversial dissertation more deficient of a *shew of proof* than his is from the beginning to the end. As the Discourse on the Church is grounded mainly, on principles in which christians are very generally agreed, it was thought it would be a saving of needless trouble and expense, not to insist much on the proof of *granted points*. And that

these principles are justly argued upon, Mr. E. in effect, confesses. For he says, "if these be true, the scheme I have built upon them is true, and must stand forever." Accordingly, he bends his whole force against these received principles: with what success we have seen; as also, how destitute of foundation his own are, which he would set up in their stead.

"The third and greatest defect," he says, "is inconsistency." This is what disputants are apt enough to charge each other with. And oftentimes not without reason on both sides. It seems to be a perquisite of humanity, and therefore I think should not be animadverted upon, too severely, by those who are in the same predicament. Especially since it may be presumed that it is involuntary. However, every instance pointed at by Mr. E. has been considered, and it is not found that his charge has been supported in any one of them, as I think the reader may plainly see.

On the whole, though the defects he has mentioned are very considerable, where they are found in a gross degree, yet I can by no means think they are the worst. If we should see a book, for instance, which carries strong marks of an uncandid, unfair mind, a disposition to cavil and misrepresent things, and by wresting, and torturing, and interpolating expressions, set them in an odious light, an inattention to strict truth, in reporting matters of fact; these, I should think, are worse faults, and more hardly excuseable, than those which he has mentioned. And yet these things have sometimes appeared, to the disgrace of humanity.

As he appears to have been uneasy at the *recommendation of three associations*, which he mentions, his affliction seems to deserve compassion. To comfort him then, I do now inform him, that whoever may have thought fit to signify their mind in favor of the publication of the *Discourse*, no recommendation, either of the performance, or its author, was ever expressed, or meant to my knowledge. But he, I suppose, knows of a book on the subject, which was recommended to the public attention, by a preface, subscribed by several respectable persons, some of whom confess that they had not read it. And no exception was taken at it, that ever I heard.

II. Next follows his *Scriitures* on the general design of the *Discourse*, which was to remove scruples and reconcile differences. As he allows this design to be laudable, so I agree with him that it ought to be promoted by laudable means, particularly "by the exhibition of light." This was what I all along endeavored, by fairly representing "the bible qualifications for church communion." Those who maintain these are, as

he says, really in the right, and those who maintain any different qualifications, whether higher or lower, are really in the wrong. And though there is no right medium between right and wrong, yet there may be "a middle way between the contending parties," in the case we have been considering; and this middle way may be the right scriptural way, if, as it often happens, the contending parties have gone into opposite extremes. And though it is certainly an evidence of "*weakness*," when men run into erroneous extremes, yet some are not so conceited and opinionative, as to take it for an affront "of an irreconciling tendency," to have their mistakes pointed out to them, and to admit that light which discovers them. And when those who are in opposite extremes mutually recede from them, the difference between them will vanish, and they will meet in the truth, which lies in the *middle way*, or at least will approach nearer to it, and to one another.

However, if men cannot see reason to recede from their former opinions, yet it may promote peace and reconciliation between contending parties, if they find that the difference is not so great or important as it was conceived to be. And it is of great use to suggest this, and make it appear, so far as it can truly and fairly be done.

It is apprehended that some things have been advanced on both sides in the dispute concerning the qualifications for church communion, which the authors could not maintain consistently with their own professed principles. These should be given up. Other things have been misunderstood, and taken in an ill sense, which was not meant. These should be truly and candidly explained, and represented. In these ways I have endeavored to reconcile, or narrow the differences of christians. And I see not but that these are proper means to promote this laudable end.

As I find nothing more under this head which concerns me, I shall only observe that he has given his own statement of the difference between the Stoddardeans and the Edwardsians, as he terms them, in the following words :

"As to the right of admission," he says, "the Edwardsians maintain that the church ought to receive none but such as give credible evidence of saving grace. On the other hand, the Stoddardeans maintain that the church ought to receive such as give no evidence of saving grace."

Mr. Edwards says that "Mr. Stoddard declares himself steadfastly of the mind that it is requisite those be not admitted to the Lord's supper, who do not make a public and personal pro-

fession of their faith, and repentance, to the just satisfaction of the church. That there must be a visibility of saving conversion to a judgment of charity." I ask now, wherein do the terms, as stated by Mr. Stoddard, differ from those which Mr. E. says the Edwardeans maintain? Or ought we to believe Mr. E.'s unvouched account in direct contradiction to Mr. Stoddard's own words? Especially when it appears to Mr. Emmons's infirmity to be apt to make mistakes in his representations. And if Mr. Edwards thought that Mr. Stoddard differed from his opponents more in reality than appearance; Mr. Stoddard, who must be allowed to know his own meaning best, declared "that the difference was rather in words than reality." And whether Mr. Emmons has misrepresented others, or not, I have such plentiful evidence of his misrepresentations before me, that I am cautious of depending on his accounts, unless he produces his vouchers.

I might also observe, that as he has stated the matter, the point which he has endeavored to maintain in opposition to me, namely, that a church may admit none but such as they absolutely believe are true saints, is wholly omitted, so that either this is no part of the Edwardean scheme, or he has given a very defective representation, and omitted the main, if not the only principle in which it differs from that of Mr. Stoddard, as to the rule of admission. Mr. Edwards indeed sometimes expresses himself on this point much as Mr. Emmons has done. But his distinction of *public* and *private* judgment, which coincides with that of the judgment of charity, and an absolute belief, softens the matter very much; and gives reason to think that his judgment on that point was different from what Mr. Emmons pleads for.

His statement of the point of dispute as to the right of access, is, I think, agreeable to what I have conceived of it. But I have shewn that Mr. Edwards has not been constant to the Edwardean principle as here stated. For he holds that some may and ought to come and be received into full communion who do not believe themselves to be converted, but greatly doubt of it, as was before noted.

To finish this head, Mr. E.'s aim and scope seems to be to exaggerate and widen the differences of christians to the utmost, and represent them as being at so great and important a distance; and that one side is so wholly in the right, that all conciliating measures or proposals must be in vain, unless one side will fully come into the views and sentiments of the other. This, I think, is a very wrong representation. It is certain

that those excellent men, who have debated these things among themselves, have always professed very different apprehensions. And whether it be a laudable design for any to endeavor to inflame and fix disaffections among christians, to tear open and widen the wounds of the church, deserves to be seriously considered.

III. We have, in the last place, his *Strictures* on the general tendency of the *Discourse*. "It appears," he says, "to be designed and calculated to prevent people's attending to this controversy. It represents the dispute of small practical importance." In his introduction it was represented as ill done in the author of the *Discourse* to revive a dispute which had rested for several years. Now it seems he is blameable for aiming to hush it up, by insinuating that both parties are nearly agreed in opinion. So that it seems I must be hit on both sides. But I answer. If people should not attend to it as a subject of controversy, they may yet attend to it as an article of the christian religion, which it is of importance that they rightly understand. And if the truth be set in a just light, with its proper evidence, so that christians rightly understand it, and are established in it; it matters not, if the controversies by which the subject has been puzzled and darkened, be suffered to sink into oblivion. And I add further, that it seems to be an encouragement to attend a subject, if we understand that wise and good men agree in the substance of the doctrine, differing not widely, nor in things of practical importance. It has been often mentioned as a discouragement from reading intricate disputes, that ordinary christians cannot think themselves capable of understanding points on which the wisest men differ so widely, and that it is vain and needless for them to trouble themselves about them.

He says, "I tell people, if they only think they ought to come, they will be accepted of God. This is grossly false, and he has produced nothing to support it. Nay, he had before quoted several sentences, p. 108, in which he says I have granted, "That those who have not credible evidence of inward sanctification, in the view of a rightly informed conscience, have no right of access." I have also declared that even true christians, whose right of access is indisputable, will not be accepted of God, unless they eat and drink worthily. I am sorry to expose such things as every good man, every man of common honesty must abhor. These things ought not so to be.

His next *Stricture* affirms that "The *Discourse* is framed from beginning to end, so as to lead undiscerning readers to

mistake morality for religion." It is impossible to say what mistakes undiscerning readers may make ; nor do I know exactly what he means by *morality* as opposed to religion ; an ambiguous word which is never used, to my remembrance, in the whole Discourse, or any thing said of it. Readers of common discernment will find true religion is constantly represented as consisting in faith, repentance, approbation of, and consent, and obedience to the gospel, &c. If this be what he means by *morality*, and if he conceives religion to be something essentially different from this, he should explain himself, and then we should know what to say to him. He adds, that " I allow moralists to call their morality by the agreeable name of holiness." I answer. I say nothing about moralists, nor has he told us whom he means by them. I was speaking of those whom the scripture calls *saints* ; and of that qualification which gives men that denomination. And if the scriptures give the title of saints to some who are not saints in heart, as they certainly do, why am I blamed for saying so ? I had no hand in composing the scriptures, nor am I authorized to correct them. If by *morality* he means any thing different from inward sanctification ; then, whether it be external holiness or not, it is very false in him to say, that I have assured any that it is as really acceptable to God as inward sanctification. What discoveries self righteous persons may make in the bible I know not ; but common christians easily discover that some who are not the subjects of saving grace are in the covenant, and so are the subjects of federal holiness, and are stiled saints. Nor has Mr. E. how often soever he has asserted the contrary, once attempted to prove his assertion by scripture.

He then pretends to be alarmed at the danger of "*self righteous moralists* ; than whom," he says, " no persons are in more danger of being self deceived." But who are meant by this description ? Does he mean those who, under a profession of christianity, breathe the spirit and tread in the steps of the old pharisees, who bless themselves in their own hearts, that *they are not like other men, who trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others*, who are conceited of their own superior knowledge in matters of religion ; "*And are confident that they themselves are guides of the blind, a light of them that are in darkness :*" and would take it with as much disdain to be suspected of weakness or blindness, as those of old who said "*Are we blind also ?*" *Who love the highest seats in the synagogues, and to be called of men Rabbi, Rabbi ? Who com-*

*pass sea and land* with sly insidious arts to make proselytes, and infuse their unfavoury leaven into the minds of the simple. Who, like the old pharisees, are fond of keeping up their distinction and distance from those whom they suppose not to be so holy as themselves ; who are precise in contending for traditions, and little punctilios, and circumstances in religion, like *tithing of herbs*, or *straining for gnats*, but exhibit little of that "wisdom which is from above, which is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, without hypocrisy ?" In a word, does he mean evangelical pharisees, hypocrites, who are deluded with their fancied experiences, feelings and exercises of heart ? There seems indeed reason to be alarmed for them. Mr. Edwards said "He had scarce known the instance of such a one in his life who had been undeceived." But what can be done for them ? Any attempt to recover them from the error of their way will be apt to be resented, as an affront "of an irreconciling tendency," which they will trample under their feet, and turn again and rend us.

The next Stricture affirms, that "I have encouraged moralists to come to the table of the Lord." He acknowledges that such only are, by me, encouraged to come as have "credible evidence of inward sanctification in the view of a rightly informed conscience." If these are not the persons he means by moralists, he cannot support his charge. If he means the hypocrites above described, I grant these are in danger of being fixed down by his doctrine in self deception and carnal security. But I have not said that these have a right of access ; nor does my doctrine encourage presumption in those who have, as is very evident.

His last remark is "The Discourse tends directly to destroy the appearance of religion in the visible church." The Discourse holds forth that none are to be admitted to the table but sound professors of christianity, of a blameless life. And who in a judgment of charity are saints in heart : "And who also manifest so much spiritual knowledge, such establishment in their holy faith, such dispositions of piety, as give reason to hope that they will adorn their profession by an exemplary life. And it appearing also that they so far understand the nature, ends, and proper uses of the Lord's supper, as to be capable of examining themselves, discerning the Lord's body, and so eating that bread and drinking that cup in remembrance of him, as that their souls may be nourished with the bread of life, and their spiritual edification subserved and promoted." Discourse,

p. 72. To practice according to this rule, it seems, tends directly to destroy the appearance of religion in the visible church.

But he says, "I intimate that those who are baptized in infancy may be admitted to communion without a public profession of religion." Answer. This is another gross falsehood. On the contrary, it is expressly said, "A visible saint holds his standing in the visible church, upon the condition of his abiding in a credible profession of faith, whether the mode of professing before the whole church, as commonly practised with us, be necessary or not, I have not intimated. His arguings upon the words *recognize* and *repute*, are like the rest. As to *formal admission*. They who are already church members need not another formal admission into the church, to make them members and give them a right to such privileges as they appear to be actually fit for. But this proves not but that it may be proper for them to be formally admitted to full communion when they manifest actual fitness for it.

But Mr. E. pretends dreadful consequences, "if churches should act on my scheme, as explained by Mr. Williams." (How Mr. Williams could explain my scheme, while he was ignorant of it, I understand not.) "Suppose," says he, "our churches should receive to their communion, all sober persons who were baptized in infancy," [he should also have added, and who exhibit all the qualifications mentioned in the last paragraph] without a public profession of religion, would not this practice bring many unqualified persons to the sacrament? Are there not sober Arians, Socinians, Universalists, Deists, Sceptics [that is, who are sound unexceptionable professors of true religion, and saints in heart in a judgment of charity.] Is it credible that Mr. Emmons could be in his right mind when he wrote this *Stricture*? Or is he become so catholic, as to acknowledge Sceptics, Deists, &c. to have all the qualifications for church communion above mentioned?

I readily grant, that churches should be very strict in observing the rules of the gospel in their admission to church-fellowship; and *requiring such demonstrations of a repenting and believing soul* as the gospel requires. If public relation, as a term of admission into the church, can be proved to be of divine institution, let them be insisted on. If not, let churches and christians use their liberty, and stand fast in it. We may shew all due honor to those whose memory is blessed, without calling any man father upon earth. And we have more reason to be jealous of our christian liberty, when any appear disposed to make such things terms of communion, which appear not to

be of divine or even human institution, and for which nothing can be pleaded, but that they are customs in some churches. To impose the observance of human customs and traditions as necessary (however lawful and laudable they may seem, if used prudently) is an infringement of christian liberty and has always had a most pernicious influence to beget superstition, corrupt the purity and simplicity of evangelical worship, to overthrow and confound the order, and deform the beauty of the church. We should be careful neither to add to the rule nor diminish from it.

What Mr. E. quotes from the result of the Synod at Boston, in 1662, is agreeable to the sentiments expressed in the Discourse p. 32, 33, 72. The first ministers of New England adopted their principles after much careful examination. And they knew how to draw fair consequences from them far better than Mr. E. if we may judge of his logical talents from the specimen he has given in his Dissertation and Strictures. They saw plainly, as any intelligent person, one would think might easily see, that what Mr. E. calls the natural consequence of their acknowledging children to be church members is no consequence. Mr. E. holds it to be a natural and necessary consequence of this principle, that all baptized persons may come and be admitted to the Lord's supper, without any evidence given of their being actually capable and fit to attend upon it in a due manner. And, as if this were granted, or self evident, contents himself with *barely saying so*, without the least attempt to prove it, though he could not but know that this consequence is denied. Then after saying, that "I maintain that baptized infants are members of the visible church; and *therefore conclude*, that when they arrive to adult years, they ought to be recognized as members in full communion, without a public profession of religion, (which is what I have never said, or intimated;) he adds, that I am more consistent than our fathers were. But as I have advanced nothing upon this point, repugnant to what has been all along generally professed in our churches, and in all the protestant churches, I see no need of vindicating our common doctrine from Mr. E's charge of inconsistency, till something more considerable appears in support of the charge, than the bare affirmation of Mr. Emmons. But this is the way in which he has settled all the disputed points which occur. He gravely decides them *ex cathedra*, without troubling himself about proofs.

He concludes, "Is it not a very serious and important enquiry, whether the church ought to open their arms so wide, as

to take into their bosom those who exhibit no appearance of religion, nor the least regard for the cause of God." I answer. If the infants of believers are the persons he means here to describe, this serious enquiry may soon be resolved in the affirmative, after the scriptures have so expressly declared that they are saints, of whom is the kingdom of heaven, and to whom the promise appertains. But I would ask in my turn, what shall we think of a man, who, having blotted many pages with great and injurious misrepresentations, would insinuate with a demure air, that those who hold the church membership of infants, particularly those who, without any designed provocation, offered to any one, have been called forth by name upon the public stage, and treated in a very harsh uncandid manner: That these, I say, notwithstanding their express and constant declarations to the contrary, are for having the church receive, to full communion, those who exhibit no appearance of religion, nor the least regard for the cause of God, and even Skeptics, Deists, and those who hold the most antichristian and scandalous errors? Is this speaking the truth in love? Is it forgotten that men have eyes, and ears, and common sense; and will use these faculties, and see and judge for themselves, and not be long imposed upon with respect to facts, which may every day be easily ascertained? And have not those who abuse the confidence of the public by misrepresentations, reason to be apprehensive that they are making work for repentance. That when the truth appears, "They will lose their influence over the minds of men, and fall under the reproach and contempt of the world?"

That professors of true religion only, who are not scandalous, are to be admitted to full communion, is a point in which all our churches, I suppose, profess agreement. And if some think it not needful that confessions of faith be publicly exhibited before the whole church, by such as have been privately examined, and approbated by the authorized door-keepers of the church, does it not shew a littleness and narrowness of mind, to make a noise, as if the hedges were all down, and the world were let into the church? If my particular mode of professing religion can be shewn to be necessary by divine institution, let it be made to appear. Though I well approve the custom in our churches of having professions of religion exhibited in public, yet far be it from me to condemn all protestant churches, whose customs are otherwise. As to what Mr. E. says, "that many churches admit members without any public evidence of their belief of the essential doctrines of the gospel, or of their

experimental acquaintance with religion, I leave it to those whom it concerns, if any such there be, to answer for themselves.

Having thus endeavored to discharge my debt to Mr. Emmons, for the attention he has paid to the Discourse on the Church, with his *Strictures* upon it; I would now balance and close accounts with him. I have not, I confess, received that instruction and edification from his performance which I hoped for. It is exceedingly different from what I should have expected from him. Like other human performances, it has defects; which, though I would not exaggerate, and much less would I be so severe a censor as to pronounce them *not veniable*, yet they are such, as I think, do not promise eminency to the author as a polemic writer. And it seems to me that he much mistook his own talents when he advanced as the champion of the cause: But I leave it to the impartial public to judge of, and do justice to the merits of his performance.

For my part, it is my sincere wish, if it be possible, as much as in me lies, to live peaceably with all men. I had much rather compose differences on tolerable terms, than carry points by contention. This was my object in offering the Discourse on the Church, to the consideration of the public; which, it was hoped, might in some good measure meet the views of both sides, and secure the main points which seemed to be aimed at. And though this might cross the views of those who were flushed with sanguine expectations of a triumph, yet the promoting of peace, and the comfort of love among good men, it was hoped, would counterbalance the disappointment of those who love contention. I wish to have no controversy with any of my christian brethren, and especially I would have nothing further to do, in this way, with Mr. Emmons. In future I would owe him nothing but love. And if he should have any any more *Strictures* to bestow upon me, I think it is not likely that it will suit with my engagements or inclinations, to receive them, otherwise than as gratuities, for which no returns must be expected. However, I shall endeavor, by God's assistance, to conduct myself as occasions shall require.

May the Lord enable and incline us all to follow peace and holiness; and direct our hearts to the right understanding, sincere love, and united observance of his holy will in all things.

THE END.



